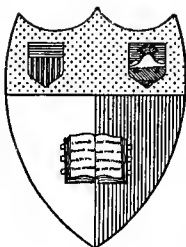


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## THE DAYS OF JEZEBEL.





THE  
DAYS OF JEZEBEL,  
AN HISTORICAL DRAMA.

BY PETER BAYNE.

AUTHOR OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: "SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL," "ESSAYS IN  
BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM," ETC.

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DEAR PROFESSOR BLACKIE,

*I dedicate to you this Drama: first, because well-remembered words of yours prevented my utterly abandoning poetical composition; and secondly and chiefly, because I wish to tell you, as expressively as I can, that the affectionate admiration with which your genius and kindness inspired me when a student in your class is as boyishly warm as ever.*

PETER BAYNE.

HARLINGTON, MIDDLESEX, May 1, 1872.







## P R E F A C E .



THE historical significance and great and varied interest of the period, whose delineation is attempted in the following drama, have attracted to it an extraordinary degree of attention ; but in none of the books upon the subject which I have seen has adequate importance been assigned, or, to speak with more precision, sufficient space been allotted, to the part played by Queen Jezebel. Elijah, one of the most picturesque figures in history, revered alike by Jews and Christians, “the grandest and most romantic character that Israel

ever produced," has thrown the other personages of the time into the shade. Treatises, orations, sermons innumerable have celebrated Elijah; Jezebel has received but that cursory mention which might be required to render the principal passages in the life of the prophet intelligible. Even Professor Ewald and Dean Stanley devote no more than a few words to the queen. To both of these writers I have, in the composition of this work, been largely indebted. Ewald's searching and masterly investigation may be considered decisive as to the outline of historical fact, and Dean Stanley furnishes the scenery amid which the events took place and the actors lived. To him and others who have recently described Syria and Palestine it is due that the transactions in which Elijah, Jezebel, and Ahab took part can be represented with a topographical accuracy and a panoramic

vividness on a par with those which we expect in a description of the campaigns of Sadowa or Waterloo. In reading Dean Stanley's account of the sacrifice upon Mount Carmel, we seem to see the very ground under Elijah's feet. But each of these eminent writers has, as I observed, only a few words to say of Jezebel. She was nevertheless the central figure in the historical group in which she appears. It was by the presence of Jezebel, as Queen of Israel, with a determinate, well-considered policy, carried out with inflexible resolution, that the activity of Elijah was called forth. Paradoxical as the statement looks, the transcendent importance of the part played by Jezebel, and the implacable resentment which she inspired, were among the chief causes why we hear so little about her. The records we possess of her reign were composed by Hebrews

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for whom it was both patriotism and religion to hate her with a perfect hatred. This hatred did not, I believe, induce them to deviate from strict veracity; but it made Jezebel's character and actions a supremely disagreeable subject, and they said as little of her as they could. When the shadow of Jezebel falls upon their page, it announces itself in black, but it flits by with spectre-like swiftness. Only in the instances of her message to Elijah, her interference against Naboth, and her death, have we minute details. She issued, apparently at an early period in her reign, an edict for the slaughter of the prophets of Jehovah. This was manifestly a cardinal event in the history of the time. It probably initiated Jezebel's policy of exterminating persecution, and it is a reasonable supposition that the profound agitation which it would occasion reached Elijah



in the solitudes of Gilead, and awoke him to his prophetic mission. Yet the sole intimation we have of the massacre occurs in one or two incidental allusions, made by the annalist when he is treating of other matters. This method of dealing with Jezebel has been followed by historians to this day. In my drama I endeavor to make her speak for herself, and I shall here mention a few of the principal circumstances which throw light upon her character and policy.

Sidon, of which she was a native, was one of the earliest seats of western civilization. At a later period it was eclipsed by Tyre, but in the second half of the tenth century before the Christian era, in which, to speak broadly, Jezebel flourished, its glory had not waned. Placed upon the shore of the Mediterranean, it was a clasp between east and

west. Its situation was, and continues to be, one of the loveliest in the world. The town was built on a ridge of rock jutting into the Mediterranean, with a mile of the richest gardens between it and the wooded crags of Lebanon. The basis of its civilization was Phœnician, but its association with Greece was close. It was renowned for the intrepidity and skill of its mariners, for the extent of its commerce, for its eminence in the arts. The seamen of Sidon first directed their vessels by the Pole star. They were probably the first to pass the Pillars of Hercules, and to surprise, with the dawning ray of civilization, the rude savages that fought with wolves and hunted wild cattle in the woods of Britain. The Sidonians laid claim to the invention of glass and of glass mirrors; and in sculpture, engraving, gem-cutting, and gold and silver work,

they were not preceded, though, likely enough, they were soon surpassed by the Greeks. The silver vase which formed the first prize in the foot-race at the funeral games of Patroclus, won by Odysseus with the special aid of Athene, was of Sidonian workmanship, and Sidonian maidens sat in the palace of Priam embroidering vestures worthy to be presented by queens to goddesses. Sidon is repeatedly and familiarly mentioned in the Homeric poems, and it seems plain from Homer's references that there was no hard and fast line, probably no traceable line at all, when Homer lived, between Phœnician culture and Greek culture, as both existed in Sidon. It is not impossible that Homer and Jezebel were contemporaries, but the likelihood is that the poet lived about half a century earlier. There may be something of poetic license in representing Jezebel as ac-

quainted with the Homeric poems, but it is certain that a Sidonian princess in the tenth century before our era had opportunity to become imbued not only with the cosmopolitan ideas which haunt commercial cities, but with Hellenic enthusiasm for poetry and art. It may be further objected that, though Jezebel might have had an enthusiasm for art, she could not have conceived so high a degree of executive perfection in works of art as the words here put into her mouth imply. I venture to answer, first, that there is no absolute proof that art had not reached a high point of development in the cities of Asia Minor and the Levant, even a thousand years before the commencement of our era ; and, secondly, that, so soon as art becomes conspicuous enough to create a deep impression upon the general mind, it is spoken of by poets and others not acquainted

with its technical methods, in terms implying an ideal state of perfection. I cannot feel quite certain that Homer never saw a finely-sculptured lion, or an exquisitely-designed vase or shield ; but reading him, as I have done, with a vague feeling that he had *not*, I was much struck with the fact on which Mr. Ruskin makes the following remark :—“The inconsistency between an Homeric description of a piece of furniture or armor, and the actual rudeness of any piece of art approximating, within even three or four centuries, to the Homeric period, is so great, that we at first cannot recognize the art as elucidatory of, or in any way related to, the poetic language.”

Baal and Ashtoreth were pre-eminently the deities of Sidon, but it can hardly be doubted that the Olympian gods were known and held in

honor. In Tyre, which seems to have been less Greek in its culture than Sidon, there was a celebrated temple to Hercules.

From all this it will seem natural that Jezebel, finding herself confronted by the austere exclusiveness of the Hebrews; which recoiled from heathen culture as from deadly sin, might regard herself as the missionary of a nobler, kindlier, more expansive civilization than that which so sternly defied her.

The bitter offence which monotheistic exclusiveness has always given to polytheistic laxity would of itself account for the fierce persecution by which, so soon as she found there could be no compromise between Baal and the real worshippers of God, Jezebel attempted to bow the people to her will; but her blood and breeding had fitted her to encounter the devotion of the Hebrews to the God

of their fathers with a fervor and a stubbornness peculiar to herself. She was daughter of Æthbaal or Eithobal, high-priest of Ashtoreth, who, by the murder of his brother Phelles, cut his way to the throne of Sidon, with which that of Tyre was then or soon afterwards combined. In her youth she was doubtless associated with her father in religious rites, and the most zealous of devotees have in all ages been the daughters of able, ambitious, and fanatically zealous priests. Baal and Ashtoreth, the Sun and the Earth, whose union was the source of beauty, life, and foison to the world, were jointly worshipped, and Jezebel's father may have been about as much the priest of Baal as of Ashtoreth. It is evident from the Scripture narrative that, in Samaria, Jezebel exercised a special presidency over the worship of Ashtoreth, while Ahab stood in a similar relation to that of Baal. At the call of

Ahab, the prophets of Baal went to meet Elijah at Carmel. The prophets of Ashtoreth were included in Elijah's challenge, but they, acting presumably under the directions of Jezebel, did not make their appearance, and thus escaped the doom of the others. The daughter of Eithobal was doubtless sincere in her convictions.

If the religion of her father was dear to Jezebel as a woman, his alliance was desirable for her as a queen. The king of the great maritime cities, Tyre and Sidon, would be an important ally of Israel in wars waged either with the Syrians on the north and north-east, or with the kingdom of Judah in the south.

We have thus before us the elements of a policy by no means base, narrow, or stupid, which would commend itself, on grounds of national culture, political advantage, and religious fanaticism, to the



Sidonian wife of Ahab. It would indeed have been a wise, a splendid, and, in all probability, a successful policy if the Israelites had been like any other ancient people. It involved the entrance of Jehovah's children into the general company of polytheistic nations, and the acceptance by the Hebrews of the principle that each people had its local God, and that Jehovah was but one of many rival deities. Against these concessions the spirit of the Hebrew people, incarnated in Elijah, rose in all the grandeur of intrepid and unconquerable faith. The conflict which ensued gave character to one of the most memorable epochs in the moral and spiritual education of mankind. Elijah and those who remained faithful to Jehovah formed a numerically contemptible minority of the people of Israel, and persons of respectability and position were in general content to compromise

the matter both with Jezebel and with Baal. The views of this party are, I trust, done some justice to by Gershom and Milchi in the delicate business of giving effect to the royal wishes respecting Naboth.

Between the northern Israelitish kingdom, over which Ahab and Jezebel reigned, and the Mediterranean, intervened a stripe of country frequently referred to both in the Old and New Testaments. Inhabitants of this district mingled with Jews and Samaritans in the audiences which listened to Christ, and from it came the woman whose appreciation of the privilege of sharing in the spiritual advantages of the children of Israel revealed itself in the gracious modesty of her prayer for a crumb from the Saviour's table. The region seems to have been from a very early period a kind of spiritual debatable land between Juda-

ism and heathenism, and I have taken this view in treating of Elijah's abode with the widow of Zarepta. There is a Jewish legend that the son of the widow whom the prophet restored, according to the common translation, from death, or, as recent critics suggest, from a death-like swoon, became the attendant of Elijah, accompanied him to Carmel, witnessed his triumph over Ahab and the prophets of Baal and subsequent flight from Jezebel, and was himself called at a later period to assume the prophetic office, and to experience the vicissitudes of circumstance and of mood which befell the prophet Jonah. Into the historical worth of this legend it were bootless to inquire, but I have availed myself of it in my drama. In like manner I have made a slight use of the semi-mythical genealogy which places the Dido of the *Æneid*, known to the Phœnicians

as Elissa, in the direct line of descent from the father of Jezebel.

The conflict between the Prophet and the Queen is not the only feature in that age which lends it significance in the spiritual history of the world. A progressive stage in moral civilization, to which a still deeper and subtler interest attaches, has for its note the contrast between the Elijah of Carmel and the Elijah of Horeb. The sublimely-beautiful imagery of the still small voice, revealing God more intensely than hurricane, earthquake, or fire, expresses as clearly as symbolical language can express anything, the Christian truth that gentleness is a diviner force than mere material power. Between the decisive declaration of Carmel, for Jehovah and against Baal, and the proclamation of the Divine tenderness in the still small voice of

Horeb, there is no discrepancy ; and yet the deep-thoughted reader of this last passage cannot help feeling that it is a Divine comment upon the slaughter of the prophets of Baal. This is not its sole, perhaps not even its chief, meaning, but this meaning it certainly has. I have treated the vision of Horeb as a prophecy of Christian times, but I probably should not have ventured to represent Elijah as naming Christ had I not been able to quote, by way of precedent, the authoritative example of Mr. Browning. I cannot throw around my subject so much dramatic illusion as the author of *Saul*, but there is less inherent improbability in the literal anticipation of Christian times by Elijah in a vision than by David when harping before his king.

“Whatever talents a person may possess to

amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them." These words were used by a great poet in offering to the world a work which needed no apology, but they state a principle on which the publication of sincere poems may be defended, although the talents of their authors are indeed inconsiderable. Degrees of culture and varieties of taste are innumerable; one man may derive from a crumbling stone, marked with a few stains of lichen, enjoyment as genuine as another from a range of mountains; and for great men and little men alike, there seems to be no guarantee that their work will interest others, except that it has interested themselves. Whatever its defects — and the reader is not likely to appreciate them more deeply than I do — my heart was in the writing of this drama; nor have I spared myself careful study in order to render it a dramatically

correct representation of the sentiments, motives and course of action of the historical personages introduced. I purposely abandoned that extreme elaboration of style which imparts to much of our most approved contemporary poetry the character of cabinet painting. I have considered it of more importance that no part of the dramatic frame-work necessary to a just and comprehensive picture of the period should be omitted, than that every part should be executed even approximately as I could wish. An event, for example, of so much historical significance as the hiding of the prophets in a cave by Obadiah could not be omitted in an historical view of the period ; but I am conscious that the prophetic chant or psalm put into the mouth of Micaiah is but a feeble imitation of the parallelism of Hebrew poetry.

I may add that I have consciously adopted

one or two phrases and images from Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Ruskin, and that I have no doubt of having unconsciously adopted more both from them and from other writers.





## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.



AHAB,	<i>King of Israel.</i>
OBADIAH,	<i>Governor of the Palace.</i>
AZIM,	<i>Chief of Jezebel's body-guard.</i>
LULI,	<i>Rhapsodist or Minstrel.</i>
ELIJAH,	<i>Prophets.</i>
MICAIAH,	
HEMAN,	<i>a Levite.</i>
JONAH,	<i>Son of the Widow of Zarepta.</i>
GERSHOM,	<i>Elders of Jezreel.</i>
MILCHI,	
EHUD,	
NABOTH.	
JEZEBEL,	<i>Queen of Israel.</i>
ELISSA,	<i>her Niece, the Dido of the Greeks.</i>
THE WIDOW OF ZAREPTA.	





THE  
DAYS OF JEZEBEL;

AN HISTORICAL DRAMA.

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ACT I.

SCENE I. *In the palace of AHAB at Jezreel.*

AHAB and JEZEBEL.

*Ahab.*

COME now, clear up, my morn, my Jezebel;  
One smile, but one, to cheer me, like the taste  
Of Helbon's wine. That tear is maddening;

Ah — let me kiss it ere it overflow

The quivering eyelid. —

*Jezebel (repelling him softly with her hand).*

Ahab, my good lord,

I cannot laugh, I cannot jest, to-night ;  
Methinks thou lov'st me not. —

*Ahab.*

My Jezebel,  
Doth thy hand press me from thy breast? Canst thou  
Even shape the thought in thy soul's deepest deep  
That Ahab doth not love thee?

*Jezebel.*

Words, sweet words,  
Oh, you were always very deft at words ;  
So is my minstrel ; Luli sings as sweet,  
And throws as costly jewel-wreaths of words  
About my neck ; but Luli's fetter not.  
They lead me not from Sidon's pillared halls,  
From the fair ships, the bright cerulean sea,  
The cedarn alleys upon Lebanon,  
From my proud father, proud, yet oh how kind  
To me, his only daughter ! Promise-words,  
From princely suitors asking for the hand  
Of a king's daughter, should be like to those

Left peraurably graven in the rock  
By Sidon's cunning workmen, flashing clear,  
Calm-flashing with the gleam of perfect truth,  
To greet the mornings of a thousand years.  
The inlaid words are words no more, and yet  
They are the beaten and unsullied gold.  
Thy words flashed bright—the gold, my lord, the gold?

*Ahab.*

My Jezebel, let us, in heart and soul,  
Preserve that quiet of the air at dawn  
In which each dew-drop gets its touch of light,  
And every blade shows lucid. You and I  
Can know no difference which will not be  
An added note of tenderest ravishment  
In the melodious concord of our love,  
If we but trust each other; if we let  
No casual glance, no word misunderstood,  
No freak of humor, no indulged caprice,  
Disturb our settled peace, or turn our eyes  
From one clear point of purpose. Am I brave?

You grant me brave. And gentle? Well, my heart,  
Could Ahab, gentle, brave, as you admit,  
Wrong his soul's darling, late-wed Jezebel;  
Who knows, ah, yes, who knows he loves her? Ask  
What boon thou wilt, and prove the love thou know'st.

*Jezebel.*

I ask my life : not the rude sustenance  
We throw to slaves or beasts ; the finer breath  
That the live spirit draws, the atmosphere  
In which my soul expanded, grew to strength  
And noble quality ; the cherishing light  
That fell about my maiden brow, the light  
Of knowledge and of wisdom and large thoughts,  
That went like those bold birds, with broided wings,  
My father's ships, far o'er the purple sea,  
To many lands, to distant isles, to men  
Of other tongues than ours and other gods ;  
Large thoughts, the mothers of large sympathies  
And tolerant forbearance, keen to see  
And separate dross from ore, yet smiling calm

On varying customs among various men,  
Finding a kindred touch in all, a tone  
Of natural harmony, and scorning nought  
That made its dwelling in a human heart.  
I bowed to Sidon's gods, but honored those  
That the great Homer sang of; reverently  
Beheld their temples, heard their oracles,  
And marked their rites divergent. Beauty's voice  
In music; beauty's form divine, that changed  
The dead rock into living image, showed  
The hero's arm in act to cast the spear,  
Lit in his eyes the glory and the joy  
Of the poised battle, set the smile of love  
To burn immortal on the eloquent lip  
Of ivory goddess, tressed and zoned with gold;  
The subtle skill that knew to match and wed  
The colors on the robe, till ecstasy  
Swooned at the sight: all these I learned to love,  
And held them sacred on whatever land  
They beamed forth blessing. Now, my good lord, say,

Did not my father pledge thee at the first  
That this my life's best life, my soul's true soul,  
Should not be quenched in our Samaria?  
And now? —

*Ahab.*

Well, now ; do I not sympathize  
With all this, Jezebel? Do I not grant,  
Nay, guard this life of thine, which thou right well  
Describest? — Better with thine eye and lip —  
Glance-words of lightning, crimson syllables —  
Than with thy voice, and that is ever sweet,  
And sweetly penetrant to Ahab's heart.

*Jezebel.*

A truce to courtesies ; the time has come  
For swift decision. Be my voice or sweet  
Or shrill, I now must speak. 'Tis not the life  
That my proud father meant or I can live,  
To be bound fast in Sinai's iron law,  
To build within some tuft of shadowy trees,  
Deep in our garden bowers, an altar small



To Sidon's gods, and offer, trembling, there  
The scanty gift. No ! no ! by Eithobal,  
By Baal himself, I worship as a Queen.  
To Jah, thou knowest, tendered we the free  
And honorable service of an old  
And strenuous god, the god of Israel :  
I smiled upon his prophets, gladly threw  
Upon his altars incense, passing by ;  
What god of all the nations asketh more ?  
But for my father's god, for Baal that guides  
Yon flaming chariot down the steeps of heaven,  
And for my own dear goddess, Ashtoreth,  
The bright, kind, loving, glorious Ashtoreth,  
I claim supremest honors. Ahab, speak.

*Ahab.*

Hush, hush, my bird of beauty, fold thy wings,  
And still thy beating bosom. Now I know  
What moved thee. On the fret and insolence  
Of men whose weapons are but wind-blown words  
Waste not the adulation of alarm.

The acrid foam upon the wrinkling lip  
Of turbulence, that feels the sovereign eye  
Restrain it, is as weak as frothy film  
Left on the sand, which you and I have oft  
At Sidon marked, when the down-going storm  
Led back the baffled surges, and it lay  
Sun-dried and impotent. Then wherefore weep?  
Thine am I, thine alone; not Jah himself  
Will tear me from thee. Weep not; every drop  
That wets thy cheek falls on my heart of hearts,  
And stings with barb of fire.

*Jezebel.*

Oh, I must weep  
To know there is but one way; to be forced  
To ask for Hebrew blood; but in my tears  
Is less of rain than lightning. I can act  
As fits my father's daughter. Tolerance  
Of those who will not tolerate is sin  
Against all toleration. — Nay, my lord,  
If you would be a king and I a queen .

Over this people, proud and stiff of neck,  
Boasting its freedom and its law, and prompt  
To catch the flame of mad fanaticisms,  
We must acknowledge frankly to ourselves  
That there are tasks appointed unto kings,  
Which bland good-nature, soft of heart and brain,  
Smiling and talking, never can perform.  
Jah's prophets do defy me, stain my name  
With foulest slanders, fill the public ways  
With howlings against Baal and Ashtoreth.  
Rebellion rears its head, and must be struck  
Dead with one blow ; and that one blow must fall  
Upon Jah's prophets, for they —

*Ahab.*

Pardon, sweet ;  
Here comes your valiant Azim, and with him  
Our trusty Obadiah. — Well, my chiefs,  
Is all safe for the night ?

*Obadiah.*

All safe, O king.

*Ahab.*

Azim, thou answerest not ; what clouds thy brow ?

*Azim.*

My king, my queen, forgive me that my face  
Is not so comfortably bland and bright  
As prudent Obadiah's. Truly, he  
Knoweth this people and this Jezreel  
Better than I. He sayeth all is safe.  
Doubtless his words are true. Long live the king  
And queen.

*Ahab.*

Speak, Azim, let us know  
The cause of this thy gloom. For who can tell  
But Obadiah may dispel thy fears ?

*Azim.*

So do I hope, O king, and at the worst  
Sidonian steel cuts true. My band and I  
Will answer for our Lady. This I know,  
That the Jah faction rage tempestuously,  
That priest and prophet stir the people up,

That furious multitudes revile the queen,  
That rumors fly abroad on every wind  
Of dark conspiracy and murderous plot,  
To slay in one night king and queen and all  
The priests of Baal and of Ashtoreth.  
The rumors may be rumors, — nothing more ;  
Oft have I seen the sky with murky clouds  
O'er-canopied, yet never drop of rain ;  
But underneath the cloudy cope men walked  
Berforce in shadow. So I walk in gloom.  
Will Obadiah bid the sky be clear ?

*Obadiah.*

I should be much in fault, O king, were I  
Less jealous of thy safety and the queen's  
Than valiant Azim. If my brow be clear,  
It is because my confidence is strong.  
Those shadowing clouds will yield no rain of blood.  
Almost I marvel that a valiant man  
Should be disquieted by rumors vain.  
There is no sign of danger which the force

We have in hand could fail to quell. . No doubt  
There is a ferment in the minds of men  
Throughout the land. Jehovah's prophets cry  
That Israel's God is angry, that his wrath  
Burns hot to see his people forced to bow  
Unto the gods of Sidon and of—

*Jezebel.*

What!

The gods of Sidon! Darest thou to prate  
As if my gods were here by sufferance?  
Be witness, King of Israel, and thou,  
Brave Azim, that it is not I who sought  
This quarrel. They, not I, have broken truce,  
And chosen war instead of peace. 'Tis I,  
Yea, I, who for this land of Israel  
Have sought the best, the princeliest policy,  
A policy of peace with neighbor Powers,  
A policy of friendship closeliest knit  
With Sidon and with Tyre, my father's realm,  
A policy of honor to all gods,

Jah 'mong the rest, but homage, first of all,  
To Baal and to Ashtoreth, whom I  
And the king, Ahab, worship. Very well ;  
What one of all Jah's prophets but proclaims  
That he would spit into the sacred eyes  
Of Ashtoreth's dread image? Peace with such  
Means base submission, treason to all gods  
Except their boasted Jah. Wise Obadiah,  
So sage, so wary, shall we name thee, then,  
A second Solomon, and much improv'd  
On David's son? Did he morosely hate  
All other gods but Jah? Did he not seek, —  
I say not in his heady youth, but when  
His brow showed harvest of maturest thought,  
And age lent softness to his cheek and lip,  
And deepened the love-fountains in his eyes, —  
Did he not then, I say, serenely wish  
That every man of every nation round  
Who visited Mount Zion there should find  
An altar to his country's gods, and thus,

With friendly gods above and friendly men  
Below, the broad green earth might smile in peace  
Up to a smiling, azure firmament?  
Such, too, my royal father's thought, and mine,  
And thine, King Ahab. Yet we all are scorned,  
And these rude prophets, raging everywhere,  
Make insurrection throughout all the land,  
To cast us from the genial, sunny height  
Of Solomon's Mount Zion to the gorge,  
Narrow and dark and haggard, where a horde  
Of raving fanatics see Samuel hew  
Agag in pieces in the name of Jah.  
By Baal, I shall smite them! Obadiah,  
Think'st thou we cannot tread these rebels down?

*Obadiah.*

They are most weak, O queen, if spear and sword  
And iron chariot are the only strength  
In which a man may trust; but if their God  
Be pleased to help them, all their enemies  
Shall be like stubble in the crackling flame,



When winds scud rapid o'er the blackened ground.

*Jezebel.*

Great swelling words, but with no jot of sense !

What armies can these prophets or their Jah

Set in the tented field? What fortresses

Can lend them shelter? Will a javelin

Not pin a traitor to the ground because

He mouths a prayer to Jah?

*Obadiah.*

What God will do,

He only knoweth. All unsearchable

By mortal man the secrets of his reign.

But what he can do he hath clearly shown

By mighty signs and wonders. By a word,

If such his will, he could the mountains fledge

With hosts of bannered angels, helmed with flame.

The great sea is his slave, and at his nod

Would bring its surges o'er the scarp'd hills.

The solid earth obeys him, opens wide

Its rock-fanged mouth to close it upon those

Marked for its prey by him. The moon by night  
Pauses among the stars to write his praise  
In silver glitterings on the solemn clouds.  
The sun that rules by day he bids to stand  
Until his folk avenge them on —

*Jezebel.*

No more

Of this intolerable rhapsody.  
Vex not mine ear with fables, fit alone  
For sucklings and for fools. Why, this same Jah,  
What is he, at the best? The petty god  
Of some low-terraced hills and craggy vales  
Between the Jordan and the sea! His realm  
Is but a little spot that meets the eye  
Of my great Baal when his chariot-wheels  
Tarry a moment on the ruddy brow  
Of Lebanon at dawn. Scarce deigns he look  
On Jah's small heritage beneath his feet.  
His eye swift ranges from the Syrian bounds  
To Egypt's river, then away, away,

Along the deep to islands of the west,  
Dim, white-cliffed islands glimmering through the mist,  
Where only Sidon's mariners can sail.  
Hark, Obadiah, know'st thou yonder star,  
Steadfast amid the heavenly company,  
Calm in its pure effulgence, while the rest  
Move round melodious? Tell me who it was  
That taught the mariner to fix his eye  
Upon the pole-star? Was it not a man  
Of Sidon? Tell me, hath thy vaunted Jah  
Done aught like that?

*Obadiah.*

He lit the polar star;  
He spake the word, and all the starry host  
Moved to their stations in the purple vault,  
With traceless steps of modulated light.  
The blue day is his vesture, the green earth  
His footstool. At his touch —

*Jezebel.*

Peace, peace, O peace!

Thou mak'st a sin of patience ! Wonder small  
That treason riots in our streets, if thus  
Its reveries haunt our palace !

*Ahab.*

Truth, my queen,  
Yet Obadiah means no treachery,  
And we must bear with him. His heart is sound.  
And let us trust, by force of gentle words,  
And skilful moderation, to allay  
These raging heats of faction in the land.  
Meanwhile, enough of speech. A soldier, I,  
Able to sleep though noises vex the air  
With petulant alarm. Hark ! — Luli's voice —

*(Singing heard in the distance.)*

Out on the lawn in the moonlight,  
Out on the lawn in the moonlight,  
    Out on the lawn  
    When the star-light is drawn  
To the soft-beaming eye of the dew bright.  
  
Meet me, my love, in the moonlight,  
Meet me, my love, in the moonlight,

Meet me alone  
When the star-light is thrown  
Through the dark cedar-boughs on the dew bright.

Come, Jezebel, he sings the words he made  
For that new air he spoke of yesterday,  
Sent him from Sidon. Come, my best one, come.

*Jezebel.*

Pardon, my lord. I leave to thee this night  
The song and dance. There is a darting pain —  
No serious matter — on my forehead here,  
And I am weary and would sleep. No doubt  
Azim will guard us well; yet give to me  
The royal seal; we know not what may hap:  
Prompt measures may be needful; thou did'st say  
That I should test thy love.

*Ahab.*

Ah, little one,  
And is this all thy wish at last? — One kiss?  
Not one! well, that's unkind. [ *Gives her the seal.* ]  
But fare thee well.

Come, Obadiah, let us hear this Luli.

[AHAB and OBADIAH go.]

*Jezebel.*

Azim, attend me in the tower alone.

*Azim.*

Most gracious queen, when I have set the watch  
And gone my rounds, I shall attend on thee.

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SCENE II. *In the high tower of Jezreel.*

JEZEBEL *alone.*

*Jezebel.*

I could not kiss him. I am glad of that —  
At such an hour to be called from my side  
By a mere breath of air, a trill of sound,  
Vacant of thought as warble of a bird! —  
Yet would to all the gods he were a king  
Like to my father! There are women now,  
Yea, many silly women, who declare  
That queen the happiest who rules her lord,

And by the flexure of his puppet arm  
Wields his dread sceptre. Fools! It is not so.  
To love a man of whom she can be proud,  
To feel a king's glance softening on her face,  
To pour intenser joy into his soul  
By her one smile, one kiss of tenderness,  
Than subject realms can yield him, — this, oh, this  
Is woman's crowning rapture. What is love  
Without a trace of worship? Woe is me  
That I should know the royal strain in man  
And be the wife of Ahab! Father, now  
I feel thy words' full meaning when, in pride  
And joy of my girl's heart, I threw my arms  
Around thy neck, and told thee, whisperingly,  
My bosom's secret. "Is he not," I said,  
"Right brave, my father? What Sidonian chief  
Urges so featly the foam-whitened steeds  
In the war-chariot? — looks so gladly calm  
When foemen dare him to the conflict? Who  
In all the court so comely? Who so kind?"

Am I not happy, father?" Then I hid  
My face upon his neck. So tenderly  
He raised it in both hands, and with a smile,  
A deep, sad smile, looked long into my eyes.  
"My Jezebel, my beautiful, bright girl,  
Slight as thou art and fragile, thou art one  
Of those who go the way of life alone.  
Thine Ahab is a gallant, courteous man,  
Pleased with himself and thee and all the world,  
Of many projects, many hopes, a face  
Glistening with credulous enthusiasm  
And vacant magnanimity, aglow  
With high-flown, impotent benevolence.  
He will be thy kind husband, full as good  
As any like to come, but not thy friend,  
Or mate, or king. My daughter, thou and I  
Have deeper bonds than kinship, and my soul  
Will be unsistered when thou art away."  
I called him naughty father, hard old man,  
And drew back, pouting; but, ah! now I feel



How true his words ! *He* was a king indeed !  
How well I knew him ! From a little child,  
Long ere I read the language of his brow,  
I'd leave my mother's arms to run to him,  
And walk beside him, holding by his hand,  
Along the margin of the mighty sea.

[*A pause. She paces the floor silently, immersed in thought. As she speaks, she seems gazing on a succession of pictures which rise before her ; her eyes are full and steady.*]

That first time I was ever in a ship  
The tawny breakers, like fierce lion-heads  
Tossing their manes in fury, gnashed on me,  
And I cowered trembling on the beach, nor nurse  
Nor mother could appease my fears. He saw,  
And with one smile, one touch, one living word,  
So braced my heart that the pale breadths of foam  
Seemed fields of lilies. Nestling by his side,  
O heaven, to feel the bounding of the sea,  
And watch the polished glittering of the waves !

. . . . .

A little maiden, foremost of the train,  
Clad in pure white with scarlet edges fine,  
And smooth brow crowned with topaz and sweet  
flowers,

So proud, so meek, so conscious of the gaze  
Of twice ten thousand, treading solemnly  
With many virgins following, she chief,  
The arch-priest's daughter, in procession fair  
Conducting him, with grave melodious hymns,  
To sacrifice in Ashtoreth's high fane.

*[She muses in silence for a few moments. Then tears  
rise into her eyes, and touching her lute gently,  
she sings in low, plaintive tones.]*

O father, I weep; yet chide not thou,  
For the tear sprang unaware,  
When that waft from the window touched my brow  
Like mine own sweet Sidon air;  
The still, cool air of the Sidon night,  
As we stood on the palace wall,  
And watched the black sail on the moon-path white,  
And the long waves float and fall.

Then chide me not, father, chide not much,  
For I still shall do and dare,  
But that waft from the window felt like a touch  
Of my own dear Sidon air.

*[Another pause. Suddenly she starts and paces with quick, short steps in agitation, speaking rapidly.]*

Yes, yes, 'twas I alone

Then dared to take the hand of Eithobal,  
And kiss him on the cheek. His face was dark.  
His eye shot fierce black fire. To slay a king,  
And he a brother ! Every heart stood still  
In Sidon, and her tall towers shook. In tears  
My mother sat and could not go to him.  
Then I went, stepping firm ; methought a pang  
Shot o'er his face when his eye fell upon  
The dark red stain my snow-white sandal caught  
From that pool on the floor. 'Twas but a moment.  
The weakness passed. His brow and eye all clear,  
But with some lingering anguish in his tones,  
He looked me calmly in the face, and said,  
“ I thank thee, Jezebel. This lesson take

Beside thy poor dead uncle ; be thyself  
Completely ; be not anything by halves ;  
Into thine every deed be thy whole soul  
Thrown unreserved. Nor look too much at means.  
Must this be done ? That same necessity  
Which bids thee do it, bids thee trample down  
All ties, all claims, all virtues that the throng  
Can know for such, in doing it. This Phelles,  
With his lax, dawdling ways and pleasant tongue,  
His feeble compromises, feeble wish  
To give the foolish people what they asked,  
Was loosening every joint of government.  
Well, I was stronger ; say that I deposed him  
And took the throne. Then had a thousand heads,  
Distracted as his own, begun to plot  
His restoration ; blood had flowed in streams  
Down every street. He lies there ; he alone.  
The crown is mine. Like to a dangerous beast,  
When one sure stroke has cleft its skull in twain,  
His faction shudders once through every limb,

Then stiffens, dead for ever. Be thou sure,  
The sudden, smiting stroke that makes an end  
Has more of wisdom, ay, and mercy too,  
Than" — Hush ! my heart be still ; here Azim comes.

*Enter AZIM.*

*Azim.*

I do commend me to your majesty,  
And wait the honor of your high commands.

*Jezebel.*

Azim, thou art of Sidon ; can I count  
Upon thee wholly ?

*Azim.*

Yea, my queen, thou canst.

I learned obedience under Eithobal,  
Thy godlike father. In the chosen band,  
His guard of life and honor, breathed no man  
In whom his trust once faltered. When he brake  
That band in two, and bade me lead one half  
To be thy guard in Israel's land, he laid  
An oath upon me that to thee should be

My supreme duty, and that death alone,  
No word of mortal man or threat of God,  
Should come between command of thine to me  
And my performance. From its scabbard here  
My sword will leap to pierce through any heart  
Beneath the sun, if such be thy command.

*Jezebel.*

There spake my brave Sidonian! Well; to work!  
Thou apprehendest what this matter means?  
The crafty Obadiah did not veil  
From eyes like thine the truth. Rebellion lurks,  
In act to spring. We must anticipate  
The clutch of fang and talon. My just rights,  
Dear as the diadem that binds this brow,  
Sealed by my husband's royal word, and held  
Sacred as Baal-fire by my father, these  
Are to be swept away. The house of Baal  
Is to be horribly profaned; the grove  
Of Ashtoreth cut down; the priests of both  
Slain on their altars. Jah, and Jah alone,

A god perhaps — I care not — but of gods  
The most austere and narrow-souled, why he  
Alone shall reign! O my great father, priest  
Of Ashtoreth, of Sidon king and Tyre,  
How have I bodied in articulate speech  
Such huge humiliation! Azim, quick,  
My tablets. Here I write instruction brief  
That thou shalt cut this deadly evil out  
With the cold steel. The ministers of Jah,  
The prophets above all, wherever found,  
Within the land of Israel, thou shalt put  
To death. The soldiers of the king, my guards,  
And every loyal subject, are enjoined  
To give thee furtherance in this. The seal? —  
I stamp it broad and deep.

Such my command.

Thou wilt obey. Farewell. The time forbids  
To speak one word of that sweet life which we  
Erst lived at Sidon.

[*She goes.*]

*Azim.*

By the happy gods,  
How her eyes lightened as she spake to me !  
Methought, upon those tablets as she wrote,  
Her face flashed rain of fire. And then  
How beautiful she is ! What Sidon girl,  
Dancing beneath the cedars in the dells  
Of Lebanon, can once compare with her ?  
The fiery, splendid creature, how she caught  
The words from Obadiah's prosing lip,  
And tossed and flung them as the impatient wind  
Tosses the scattering foam. Poor man, he looked  
All dazed and thunder-struck ; and Ahab, too,  
Although he loves her, fears the bright, wild glare  
That lights her eyes when her soul's deeps are moved  
And Eithobal looks through the glittering orbs.  
Is this enchantment stealing over me ?  
A man might live in pain a score of years  
And then be richly guerdoned by the joy  
Of dying for thee, Jezebel ! — O fool,



I dream, I babble. Ere the glimpse of dawn  
Must riders bear to all our garrisons  
These words of doom. And I, with every man  
Who wears Sidonian steel, besides all those  
Of the king's soldiers whom I dare to trust,  
Must sweep the plain of Jezreel and begin  
The work of slaughter. Help me, Eithobal;  
Thine influence be upon me, more to me  
Than any god that lives, or Jah or Baal.

---

SCENE III. *The interior of a cave. One torch, in the recess, shedding a faint light through the place. A company of prophets hiding. A hyæna rushes in. Seeing the light it attempts to escape, but OBADIAH, guarding the entrance, transfixes it with his spear, and it dies, uttering a low, scarce audible moan. A minute afterwards there is heard a trampling of horse-hoofs and then loud voices.*

*First Voice (heard from without).*

Halt, brothers. Bootless that we scale the cliff;

Beneath yon curtain of wild vine I know  
There yawns a cave ; but as I reined my horse,  
Meaning to reach it, a hyæna gray,  
Which I had startled by the reedy pool,  
Ran straight before me, leaped from ledge to ledge,  
And entered. With keen eye I watched the spot.  
It has not re-emerged, nor have I heard  
The slightest sound.

*Second Voice.*

Well spoken ! The shy beast  
Would shun the company of prophets. Come,  
The day is well-nigh spent, and my right arm  
Falls on my side for very weariness.  
If every one of these mad Hebrew dogs  
That I have slain to-day has left a notch  
On my good Sidon blade, it counts a score.  
Its edge wants whetting for to-morrow's work.  
In yonder cleft, three bowshots hence, a well  
Glistens beneath its palms, and gently feeds  
A patch of sweetest grass. There let us camp.

[*The trampling of horse-hoofs in retreat. When they have died away, OBADIAH speaks.*]

*Obadiah.*

The Lord of hosts be praised ! Till morning break,  
Azim's fierce riders will not seek us here.  
When the first watch is past, and deepest sleep  
Wraps all the land, ye shall arise and flee.  
Meanwhile, unto our gracious God, who, though  
He doth afflict us, is compassionate,  
Let us make offering of prayer and praise.  
Micaiah, son of Imlah, take thou up  
Thy prophecy and lead the choral hymn.

I.

God of our fathers, hast thou cast us off,  
And are we smitten, nevermore to rise ?  
Hast thou forgotten Abraham, thy friend ?  
And Israel, thy chosen ?  
  
Is not the blood of thy prophets on the mountains ?  
In every green place and in the streets of the city ?  
In the paths of the fields,  
In the goings up unto the hills,  
In the haunts of the wild goats,

In the lone rocks of the conies,  
They fall by the edge of the sword.

A dripping from the ledges of the rocks,  
A dripping not of lucent threads  
Of beautiful water :  
It pours down red,  
It is purple on the rocks ;  
The land is wet with blood.

A wailing of young voices,  
A wild wailing in the schools of the prophets ;  
The young men are dead on the threshold ;  
Their blood is on the lintels of the doors.

## II.

Arise, O Lord, arise !  
Awake, why sleepest thou ?  
Pluck thy right hand from thy bosom,  
Drink of the wine of thy fierce indignation.  
Go forth to vengeance,  
Go forth with a shout,  
Arise to our help,  
O Holy One of Israel !

## III.

Shall they in the house of Baal say, Aha ! Aha !  
Shall the priests of Baal say, Our eyes have seen it ?  
Shall the harlots in the groves,  
Striking on the timbrels,

Tossing their heads on high,  
Laughing in great joy,  
Tell it to each other in the dance,  
And give thanks to Ashtoreth?

## IV.

Oh that thou would'st make bare thine arm,  
And smite this Jezebel!  
Shalt thou not require of her thy servants' blood?  
Shall she not repent her of the death of thy prophets?  
She is very proud,  
Jezebel is very proud;  
She setteth her face as the morning sun,  
She lifteth up her head like the moon among clouds;  
Bring her unto the dust,  
Consume her, consume her;  
The innocent blood calleth against her,  
The blood of hoary men and of white-browed youths,  
From the ground she hath defiled.  
Cast her down even unto hell,  
Consume her! Consume her!

## V.

Is this the King of Israel,  
That is ruled by a woman?  
Is this King Ahab,  
That trembleth before an arrogant heathen?  
Hath he borne the shield and the spear?  
Hath he gone in the chariot to battle?  
Hath he shouted in the face of the foemen?

Wherefore, then, should he fear a woman,  
And the countenance of his wife make him afraid?

Clothe him with the garments of a maid-servant,  
Let his place be in the women's chambers,  
Let his hand take hold of the distaff,  
Let him bring wool to the spinning women.

## VI.

What is this Baal, in whom Ahab trusteth?  
What is this Ashtoreth, in whom Jezebel is glad?  
Like a dream when one awaketh,  
Like the dew-drops when the sun is hot,  
They shall pass away and shall not be found.

The ships of Sidon sail very far,  
The mariners of Tyrus reach the ends of the earth.  
Sidon shall be a naked rock,  
Tyrus shall be a drying-place for nets :  
Then from far western islands shall they come,  
Idle men shall come with peering eyes ;  
They shall dig from the ground the carven image,  
The carven image overlaid with silver.  
What, they shall say, is this piece of wood,  
What is this curiously shaped bit of timber ?  
They shall answer, This is Ashtoreth ;  
Unto this thing the people bowed down,  
In this block the foolish people trusted.  
They shall tell it to their children, looking,  
With soft gold hair and blue eyes, wondering,  
In the remotest islands of the west.

Ashtoreth shall become a faint remembrance,  
A picture on a wall, a curious dream,  
Which only idle persons talk about.  
And then shall hymns arise, at morn and eve,  
From thousand thousand voices to our God,  
Still deepening in their swell as earth grows old  
Till one great anthem rise from all the world.

## VII.

Arise, O Lord!  
Let thine enemies be scattered!  
Remember the ancient days,  
And thy wonders of old!  
By the midnight cry in the land of Egypt,  
By the host of Pharaoh whelmed in the deep,  
By the pillar of fire in the desert,  
By the Jordan cleft in twain  
When thy people passed over,  
When Israel, thy chosen, passed over,  
Arise, O Lord! arise.

*Obadiah.*

It is the hour ; now, prophets, follow me ;  
The kindly moon is in the silent sky.  
Step cautiously from ledge to ledge, and keep  
Within the shadow of the cliff. I go

Before you till ye reach the utmost bound  
Of Israel's land. In Judah ye are safe.

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SCENE IV. *In the Palace of Samaria.*

AHAB and JEZEBEL.

*Ahab.*

No, Jezebel, oh, no, I chide thee not,  
Strange woman, diamond-bright and diamond-hard,  
Yet ever, ever dear ; I chide thee not  
But it is pity ; I in sooth could weep  
For my fair hope — to see it lying there,  
Death-white and cold, its young hair dripping blood.  
Can I forget how, when I brought thee first  
Through lanes of faces beaming love on thee,  
Faces more radiant than the summer boughs  
That waved o'erhead, while many voices rose  
In shouts of welcome, then my bosom glowed  
To think that thou and I would sit in joy,  
Throned in the people's hearts in equal love,



And that the children lilt in the streets,  
Ay, and their children's children, would enwreath  
In one sweet garland of unfading song  
The names of Ahab and of Jezebel?  
I was so proud of thee, — so proud to take  
All praise, all joy, all love as one with thee!  
And now the blood, the blood — O Jezebel!

*Jezebel.*

There was no other way. The deed is done.  
Shame not thy manhood with effeminate tears;  
Nor hanker after the unwholesome warmth  
Of the crowd's foolish smiles. There is a love  
Kinned with contempt and born of slavishness;  
There is another which strikes deep its root  
In prudent fear and measure accurate  
Of the arm's weight in smiting. Base the one,  
Snake-like and grovelling, impotent to help,  
With venom lurking in its soft, sly mouth,  
And teeth to bite the moment you are down.  
The other is a leopard at your feet,

Instructed to obedience by the whip,  
Ready to spring upon and rend your foes,  
And richly paid by leave to lick your hand.  
Be king, my lord, of leopards, not of snakes.  
Now hold I thee for sovereign in this land,  
And I will kiss thee and be good to thee.  
Come to the lower garden, where the springs  
Have their new border of Sidonian lilies,  
And my sweet Sharon roses break in bloom.



## ACT II.

SCENE I. *A hillock in a wood of firs: the sea visible in the distance. ELIJAH resting on a gray knoll.*

*Elijah.*

HERE will I pause. The Voice that guideth me  
Bids me advance no further. Long the way  
That I have come, from Israel's eastern bounds,  
Across the land, till now I hear the sea,  
In long, low roll of muffled thunder, beat  
The patient shore. Beyond this whispering wood  
I see—the roofs and walls and flanking towers  
Faint-wavering through haze of silvery gray,  
The blue sea clear behind—a little town.  
Yonder the gate.—Hush! hear I not a step?  
A woman, bowed with years, and tottering  
Beneath a little load of sticks. She comes

Close to this place, yet marks me not, and now  
In broken accents talketh with herself.

'Twere well to hear before I speak to her.

*Woman.*

A poor, lone widow ; and my son, good sooth,  
Is little help. His father always said  
That Jonah never would be much ; a boy,  
That will sit wondering, questioning, when he ought  
To search the hollows of the wood for springs,  
Or dive into the caves for trickling drops.  
What is the use of wondering? Well I wot  
That I would live at peace with both the gods,  
Or either, if I only could be sure  
The other would not hurt me. How, I pray,  
Is a poor, simple soul like me to tell  
Which is the greatest and most terrible?  
For, when a prophet of the Hebrews comes,  
He says that Jah alone can smite and save ;  
That Jah's fierce anger with the sinful land  
Dries up the streams and bids the tender dew

Refrain from falling ; that the might of Jah  
Brought Israel through the sea, while Egypt's host  
Sank in the waves. I tremble, and am still.  
But when he goeth, comes a priest of Baal,  
And says that over Sidon's crowded masts  
And frowning battlements the fane of Baal  
Towers eminent ; that Baal rides in the sun,  
Reining his steeds of flame, and scattering light  
To ripe the harvest when his mood is kind,  
Or fire to scorch it when his wrath is hot  
As now. What can I answer? Either god  
Were good enough for me. But, one would think,  
Neither might grudge the little drop of rain  
To green my patch of corn and save my son  
And me alive. — Ah, now, I blame the boy  
For grumbling and for wondering, and I  
Am just no better than the feckless lad.  
See how I talk and talk. What help in that?  
I shall turn homeward. Mercy ! who is here?  
A Hebrew man, dark-browed, with shaggy beard

And eyes that glance like lightning in the wood :  
A prophet by his mantle, and, I think,  
One of the mightiest. Lo ! he speaks to me.

*Elijah.*

Fetch me, I pray thee, in a drinking-cup,  
A little water ; for I greatly thirst.

*Woman.*

I hasten to obey.

*Elijah.*

Bring with thee, too,  
Of bread a morsel.

*Woman.*

Pardon me these tears,  
O prophet of Jehovah, for I know  
That such thou art : my guarded store of meal  
Within the barrel, save one handful small,  
Is gone, and scarce a drop of oil is left  
Within the cruse ; and I have come, sore spent,  
To gather some small sticks to dress the last,  
That I may eat it with my son and die.

*Elijah.*

Do as thou sayest ; but yet, first of all,  
Bake me a little cake. And hearken, thou :  
Thus saith the Lord, " The barrel shall not waste  
Nor the cruse fail until the time when I  
Shall send rain on the earth." Think not of death,  
But life, this day. The God of Israel  
Looks graciously upon thee and thy son.

---

SCENE II. *On the sea-shore near Zarepta.*

ELIJAH and HEMAN, a Levite.

*Heman.*

'Tis he. Slow-pacing by the surf he comes,  
In melancholy thought, as is his wont ;  
His lips move sometimes, but his tongue is mute.  
Now will I speak to him ; my fears that he  
Might be a spy of wily Jezebel  
Have passed away ; but reverence for himself

Almost would seal my lips.

The Lord be with thee !

*Elijah.*

Who art thou that dost greet me in this name ?

*Heman.*

I am a Levite, driven from my land  
By the crowned sorceress that worketh woe  
To every one whose heart remaineth true  
To Israel's God. At intervals I roam,  
By devious paths, under the cloud of night,  
Through Israel's valleys, entering the homes  
Of men whom I can trust, and doing there  
The office of a priest, and speaking words  
Of comfort to the desolate of heart.  
Then, when the murderers are upon my track,  
I seek the many chambered, glimmering caves,  
Scooped by the torrent in the ledge o' the hill,  
With many outlets, many entrances,  
Steal in the moonless night through silent glens,  
And reach my sheltering cavern by the sea.



Yon dead tree and the gray crag at his side  
Blindfold the entrance. Here, all unaware  
That I could hear thee, hast thou stood alone,  
At morn and evening, by the withered tree,  
An emblem of the drought, and prayed aloud  
For pity on the sore-afflicted land.

*Elijah.*

Then know'st thou who I am? I greet thee, brother,  
Right joyfully in name of Him we serve.

*Heman.*

Yea, I do know thee ; for no mortal man  
Could dare to speak to Him who sent the drought  
As I have heard thee speak, had he not been  
The minister who syllabled God's wrath  
To Ahab and to Jezebel. Thou art  
That prophet of Mount Gilead who did face,  
In the full blaze of noon, the King and Queen,  
And told them that the day of doom had come,  
And vanished. From that time no voice hath told,  
Throughout the land of Israel, where abode

Elijah ; and thy servant fain would learn  
What hath befallen since that fateful hour.

*Elijah.*

Full gladly, brother, will I tell it thee ;  
For as the water-flag that long has drooped,  
Trailing its white blades in the burning sand,  
Listens, with rising head and quickening eye  
Of hope new-born, when the first tremulous gush  
Of water round its roots recalls the song  
It knew so well in spring, my heart has drunk  
With sweet, reviving influence the words,  
The old familiar words and tones and looks  
Of a true Israelite.

The last I saw  
Of Jezebel was her half-risen form  
And outstretched hand, as if she would have sprung  
Forth from the chariot where she rode with Ahab,  
To seize upon me. I was borne away  
Far eastward over Jordan, till I came  
To Cherith's brook. There many days I dwelt

Within a cave that opened on the bank ;  
And every morning, ere the sun grew hot,  
And every evening, when the long white streaks  
Grew crimson streamers on the vaulted blue,  
There was a sound of wings above my head,  
And, circling slowly through the winnowed air,  
Two ravens brought me store of flesh and bread.  
I drank the brook, but soon its crystal wave  
Died down to scorching dust. And then again  
The Voice I must obey commanded me  
To follow in its course the journeying sun,  
Passing Samaria's bannered hill, and where  
Jezreel's white palace takes the eye o' the morn,  
Until, unharmed, I reached the lonely sea.  
In the fir-wood beside Zarepta here  
I saw a woman, and the Voice within  
Told me that God had sent me with his alms  
To her and to her son. She brought me bread  
And water, and I entered in with her ;  
And many days have passed away since then,

But never did her little stock of meal  
Shrink in the barrel, or the pure, bright oil  
Fail in the cruse. And, brother, thou may'st come  
To share God's feast : there is enough for all.

*Heman.*

O my dear lord, how my heart glows in me,  
How hope awakens in me like a dove  
When the flame-arrow of the dawning east  
Strikes on her breast ! Yet tell me further how  
The lamp divine of prophecy has burned  
In this land, where the scattered rays of truth  
Twinkle 'mid heathen darkness like faint stars  
On the black brow of night.

*Elijah.*

The woman spake  
Not much, but always listened carefully :  
With much of fear ; not much of faith ; less love :  
Not doubting that Jehovah is a God,  
Yet cautious ever to keep wide a door  
Of safe retreat to Baal in case of need.

She had been born on the bright border-land,  
Where Sidon's gardens, carpeting the plain,  
Between the yellow margin of the sea  
And the blue ridge of Lebanon, display  
Their broderies of many-colored flowers  
And olive-tufts and companies of palms.  
She had been born a heathen, of a race  
Ancient and much renowned in Sidon's wars.  
Her husband was a man of Ephraim.  
Ten years ago he died. Their only son,  
A stripling of sixteen, stirred all my mind  
With a strange wonder. Few and low his words,  
But in his large gray sparkling eyes there lay  
A multitude of thoughts which he reserved,  
Partly in doubt, partly in indolence.  
His mother chid him oft for lounging ways ;  
But with a curious gentleness, that pleased  
Even when it made her angry, he put by  
All her complainings. Bodily indolence,  
Casing a sleepless mind,— such Jonah is.

The mighty question between God and gods  
Was his birth-heritage. He called himself  
A Hebrew, but the 'wildering dazzlement  
Of heathen power and splendor on this coast,  
Where Tyre and Sidon face the westering sun,  
Perplexed him from the reverent simpleness  
Of perfect faith. The notion still remained  
Of conflict in the heavens, a battling crowd  
Of rival deities, some cowed, some crowned.  
One God, a Spirit, infinite and sole, —  
Whose robe hath room for all the varying tints  
Of nature's color in cloud, sky, flower, wave,  
Sidereal fire and glimpse of morning dew,  
Soft lights of eve and murk of midnight storm ;  
Whose voice is not the thunder-peal alone,  
But lisp of leaflet in the breeze-touched wood, —  
Filled not, for him, the universe. The drought  
Had brought him close unto the gate of death,  
And though he rallied when I came, he still  
Would fall in fits and trances. On a day

When I had wandered long upon the sands,  
I saw, on entering the cottage door,  
His white face propped against his mother's arm,  
His breast unheaving, limbs dropped languid down  
Across her knees. He had been dead an hour.  
She tried to hide her anger, stifle down  
Her tears, but both found way. With passionate sobs  
And fiery flashings of the eye, she spake :  
"I never, never knew that my poor boy  
Was half so much to me ; but now I feel  
That I would rather be shut up with him,  
And have him on my breast, although so cold,  
In some rock tomb upon the windy shore,  
Than walk in brightest palace all alone.  
It is not that he worked for me, but that  
I never knew till now how sweet a thing  
It was to work for him. O man of God,  
Why is it that great Jah so strangely deals?  
He shows me special favor, fills for me,  
From heaven's own stores, the barrel and the cruse,

Then, though I'm sure I always did my best  
To pay due reverence unto him and thee,  
And my poor boy did ill to man nor God,  
Sudden he stabs me to my very heart  
Through this dead clay, that was the life, the light,  
Of my old eyes." — "Give me thy son," I said.  
"Oh, touch him tenderly, my lord," she cried ;  
"He was a faultless and a darling child."  
I took him from her arms, and bore him thence  
Unto the loft in which I slept, and laid  
The body on my bed, and stretched myself  
Three times upon it, praying earnestly  
To God the while. Then first a shivering,  
A breath of motion like the delicate fret  
Of faintest wind on surface of a lake,  
Stole over him from head to foot ; and then  
A misty bloom dawned soft upon the cheek :  
Slow laboring, groan on groan, the bosom heaved,  
And a low, moaning sigh stole through the lips.  
His eye flashed open suddenly, but strange



And all unlike the light in living eyes  
The gleam of those wan orbs. "Ah, let me dream," —  
These his first words, and spoken as in trance :  
"Float not away into the deeps of heaven,  
Ye radiant ones ; stern prophet, wake me not ;  
My dreams were sweet — oh, sweet." I only said,  
"Thy mother waits." He sat, and wistfully  
Looked round. A light seemed passing from his face,  
And many memories dying in his eyes.  
"Yes, all the heavens have vanished ;" then he wept :  
"But earth grows warm and dear to me again ;  
Take me back to my mother." In mine arms  
I gently lifted him and brought him down.  
"Now know I," cried she, "that the Lord is God,  
And he alone, and that his goodness doth  
Endure for ever. Also this I know,  
That thou, Elijah, art the man of God,  
And that no other prophet is like thee."  
Then with a storm of weeping to her breast  
She strained her son.

From that day forth the lad  
Clung to me close, and hung upon my words,  
And took it for his pride to wait on me.

*Heman.*

Thou fillest all my spirit's thirsty wells  
With living water. Oh how glad were I  
To eat this heavenly bread, and see the youth  
Whom thou hast rescued from the hand of death.  
It may not be. An impulse peremptory,  
That brooks no loitering, bids me hasten back  
Unto the land of Israel, to prepare  
For the great day that draweth nigh, a day  
Of mercy, wrath, revealing : for I know  
That the great prophet of Mount Gilead  
Is marked by Him who called him from the hills  
For other work than sweet domestic tasks,  
To teach a meditative boy, or dry  
A weeping widow's tears. This halcyon calm  
Presageth tempest. Now farewell, Elijah.  
Ere many days I shall again behold thee.

SCENE III. *The widow's cottage.* ELIJAH.

*Enter HEMAN.*

*Heman.*

My Lord Elijah, Israel calls on thee !  
The whole land heaves with long, impetuous swell  
Of fervent feeling, as when mighty throes  
Of earthquake wrinkle up the tortured plain.  
The clamors deepen to that tune of storm,  
Which shakes the heart of kings. Men dreaded her,  
The Sidon woman : on the mountain gray  
The conies crouch and tremble when, outspread,  
Broad vulture-wings eclipse the light of heaven ;  
But if, from cave beside them, while they cower,  
The gaunt wolf springs out suddenly, they start  
In keener terror, and forget the while  
The poisoning vulture : so the present death,  
The death of gnawing famine, glaring fierce  
Into their eyes, has quelled with greater dread  
The people's awe of Jezebel, and Fear,  
Dying in travail-pangs, hath given birth

To Courage, the stout man-child. "Shall the land  
Become," they cry, "one cinder? 'Tis the Lord  
Hath sent this woe. Elijah bade the sky  
Withhold the rain, because the house of Baal  
Stands in Samaria, and Jezebel  
Hath slain the prophets of the Most High God.  
Forth, men of Israel, forth; take spear and shield,  
Spread your white tents upon the hills, and blow  
The trumpet loud that all the land may hear."  
It is a leader that they need, Elijah;  
Wilt thou not rise and call them to the field?

*Elijah.*

While I have heard thee, Heman, many thoughts  
Have swept tumultuous through my soul, as oft  
The shrill wind, harrying the autumn boughs,  
Through mountain solitudes. But dumb and still  
I must remain-until His Breath descends  
Whose servant and whose minister I am.

*Heman.*

I know, my lord, full well, and reverently

Shall I await the finger-touch of God  
To set thee moving. But the time is apt.  
The fierce extremity of ravenous dearth  
Hath driven Ahab from Samaria,  
To search the land for hidden springs, and pools  
Not yet dried up beneath their tall white flags,  
That so the chariot horses and the last  
Of the royal herds may not fall dead with thirst.  
Now know I that his search hath led him on  
Until he nears the roots of Carmel hill,  
That on its forehead takes the sun's last ray,  
Eve after eve. 'Tis hence but some few miles,  
Almost due south. There Kishon's shrunk stream,  
Crawling in many a long and languid twine,  
Moves like a dying serpent to the sea ;  
And there, if anywhere, the king will find  
The water that he seeks.

*Elijah (rising suddenly).*

The Breath has fallen !

Now know I why the Hand that darkly led

From the safe East to the endangered West  
Brought me unto Zarepta. 'Tis the same,  
Though Ahab knoweth not, that leadeth him  
To Carmel. Farewell, widow ; Jonah, thou  
Shalt come with me. I go to meet the king.

*Widow.*

Thou brought'st him to me from the jaws of death,  
And I can trust thee with him now. Farewell.

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SCENE IV. *The same : a week subsequently.*

*The WIDOW and some of her neighbors.*

*Widow.*

True, neighbors, true ; it is an anxious time ;  
Never before was Jonah one whole day  
Out of my sight. And sore his help I need ;  
For, since the rain hath come, the meal no more  
Is fresh each morning ; and we must begin  
To till the little field as heretofore.

[HEMAN *enters.*]

O Levite, canst thou tell me of my son?

*Heman.*

A draught of water, pray thee, first of all.  
Jonah, when I beheld him, three days back,  
Was safe and well. Therefore, no more of him.  
My heart o'erfloweth with diviner thoughts;  
And I will now rehearse to thee and these  
What, if I live for twice the three-score years  
And ten allotted unto men below,  
Will no more take obscuring dust from time,  
Or mix with other memories in my mind,  
Than the clear lustre of the burnished sun,  
Once kindled in the heavens by word of God,  
Will be obliterated from the sky  
By the blue hazes of the earthly dawn,  
Or smoke from roofs of little human towns.

When from this cottage-door Elijah passed,  
Swiftly he went, with fervent tread, and eyes

Burning the distance. When the king appeared,  
We others paused. The prophet stood alone.  
Ahab was first to speak, and yet methought  
'Twas less in courage than in some vague hope  
To ward the flash he saw about to leap  
From 'neath the prophet's clouded brow. "Art thou,"  
He said, "the man that troubleth Israel?"  
Elijah looked at him a minute's space,  
As one looks at a wilful, wicked child,  
Who speaketh folly in his wickedness.  
"Have I the rain in hollow of my hand,  
Do the dews hear my voice, and are the clouds  
Elijah's flocks within the hollow hill?  
God troubleth thee ; thou troublest Israel :  
For thou hast chosen Baal, and left the Lord."  
The monarch's visage fell. Relaxed he stood,  
A-tremble, like a tall tree that one gust  
Of scorching wind hath struck through all its leaves  
With shivering blight. The prophet spake again :  
"Bid thou the trumpets blow through all the land,



And summon Israel to meet thee here  
On Carmel. Let Baal's prophets also come,  
And Ashtoreth's, to have this question tried."  
King Ahab frowned, yet dared not answer, Nay ;  
Good Obadiah, faithful to the Lord,  
Seconded weightily ; and Jezebel  
Was far away from her obedient lord  
In Jezreel. Therefore, though he spake no word,  
He signified assent, and instantly  
Swift messengers rushed forth throughout the land.  
All Israel had been watching for the word,  
And rose as one man, foresting the plains.

By scores, by hundreds, chaunting to their god,  
Clad in white stoles with frontlets of red gold,  
Baal's prophets marched. But Ashtoreth's remained  
Close in the groves ; such Jezebel's command,  
Who in her palace sat and gloomed, the while,  
Fretting that Ahab had escaped from her.  
The crowd, through all its myriad ranks, was still,

With wide, expectant eyes, the king in front.  
Forth stepped Elijah ; melancholy fire  
Burned in his swarthy-glowing eye ; he looked  
In angry love, impatient scornful grief,  
Wonder and pity, on the multitude.  
“ How long,” he cried, with voice like autumn blast,  
“ How long, O Israel, halt ye between two?  
If Jah be God, than serve ye Him : if Baal,  
Then Baal.” The great crowd stretched to him, and  
                    rocked  
In mighty agitation to and fro.  
The gray crags caught his words, and echoed them  
To Carmel’s crest ; it threw them to the peak,  
Snow-crowned, of Lebanon, which tossed them far  
Along the surges of the boundless sea.  
He spake again. “ The God that answereth  
By fire, let Him be God.” As when a wave,  
That rears itself, a wall of polished glass,  
For leagues along the shore, and hangs in air,  
Falls with one deafening crash, so rose the shout  
Of answering acclamation from the crowd.

White-faced, with restless lips and anxious eyes,  
Baal's prophets heard, their hundreds cowed and mute  
Before one man. They dared not, in mere shame,  
Decline the challenge. While the dusky gray  
Of earliest dawn was fluttering into blue  
They built their altar : and when first the sun  
Showed his clear forehead on the mountain-tops  
Their chaunted prayer to the appearing Baal  
Rose loud and shrill, that he would stretch his hand  
With burning torch to light the sacrifice  
And prove himself a god. The sun rose calm,  
Springing as if in joy from earth's low hills,  
Upon the vaulted radiance of the sky,  
All unregarding these his worshippers.  
The hymn's last echoes died away ; the sun  
Burned with fierce heat, swift-striding up the blue.  
Standing on that scorched hill, we felt his rays  
Prick like sharp spear-points. Then I heard again  
Elijah's voice. I had been watching close  
Baal's prophets, but I now looked straight at him.

A fearful gleam was in his eye, a mirth  
Too stern, methought, for man of woman born ;  
His glance was vexing those robed prophets more  
Than the sun's fire ; and then he gave it words.  
“ Might he not spare one little spark, but one,  
Your fine god riding there,” he cried, “ to light  
Your sacrifice ? He surely has enough ;  
He's burning you, if not your offering.  
Poor souls, I pity you ! ” They screamed for rage.  
“ A little louder,” smiled he, “ for perhaps  
In his warm chariot he has fallen asleep.”  
They leaped, they danced, they cut themselves with  
knives,  
Till the blood soaked their robes and poured in streams  
From their lanced foreheads. Then he laughed aloud,  
Great shouts of laughter, till the echoes rang  
From crag to crag on Carmel. “ Keep it up,  
Another dance ! ” he shrieked ; “ another song !  
Leap rather higher ; never grudge some drops  
Of your dear blood, so precious in his sight.  
Ye know he is a god, my reverend friends ;

How often have ye told the people so?

Your pretty speeches and the miracles

Which ye have shown them, these were not, of course,

Mere lies accursed. He is a god, you know :

Louder, I say ; he's old, perhaps, and deaf ;

Out with your beards — that's hopeful — crack your  
throats

In yelling chorus. Good, good — ha, ha, ha ! ”

He rubbed his hands, waved wildly in the air

His sheepskin mantle, laughed until the tears

Streamed down his face, and all his body shook

With paroxysms of mirth and scorn. Ah me !

That laughter sounded fearfully, and seemed

Not human in its fiery ruthlessness.

But as he stood on Carmel, charred and gray,

A dead land lay below, his native land ;

And the white corpse-eyes made appeal to him

Against its murderers, murderers of the truth,

Baal's lying prophets. Furthermore, I think

That this Elijah is not to be judged

Like common men. The little, rippling lake,

Safe hid among the hills, can never know  
The ocean's tempests. — So they writhed and tore,  
In ecstasies of grief and rage. At last  
They hung their heads in mute despair, and looked  
Upon the ground.

Elijah stood erect,  
Terrible earnestness and majesty  
Now sitting on his brow. Twelve stones he took, —  
Mark, twelve ; this challenge was in the full name  
Of Israel as it stooped to David's hand,  
And with one mighty throb the multitude  
Approved Elijah's purpose ; — twelve smooth stones  
From Carmel's side, and with them he repaired  
Jehovah's altar. Then, at his command,  
We filled the trench with water, till it ran  
Around the altar like a surging stream,  
And washed the stones, and soaked the wood beneath  
The sacrifice. He knelt upon the ridge,  
Against the golden-placid sky of eve ;  
Brief, simple, clear, his words arose to heaven :

“That God would testify unto himself  
And to his prophet, and would turn the hearts  
Of his own people back to him again.”  
Scarce had he spoken when a broad white glare,  
Scattering earth’s light like darkness in its path,  
Keener than lightning, calmer than the dawn,  
The sword of God that proveth him by fire,  
That proveth him by fire in every age,  
Stooped from above and touched the sacrifice.  
In the white blaze the sun grew wan, and hung  
Like a pale moon upon the glimmering sky.  
The fierce flame licked the water up, the wood  
Crackled aloft, the very altar stones  
Glowed fiery red. The pillared smoke arose  
Through the hushed air in towering flawlessness,  
Then spread out, calm and broad, like God’s own face  
Breathing acceptance. But Baal’s prophets shook  
In utter fear, and smote upon their breasts,  
And grovelled, moaning, down into the dust.  
Clear broke the shout from that great multitude,

“Jah is the God! Jehovah, he is God!”

“Take them,” Elijah said; “let none escape.”

We closed around Baal’s prophets, thrust them down  
To where the thirsty Kishon slowly crawled.

There made Elijah bare his arm, and score

By score he slew them. From the heap of dead

Oozed a broad rill of blood, that swelled the wave

Of slumbrous Kishon. But the fickle crowd,

Now weary, cast them down upon the ground,

Mute, but their hungry eyes cried, “Rain, Elijah;

The drought still burns; we want the rain, the rain.”

Within another hour they would have torn

The prophet limb from limb. He therefore turned,

And leading Jonah with him by the hand

Again ascended Carmel. More than this

I know not of his doings; ere an hour

Had passed, each ledge and terrace of the hill

Was sheeted with the rain. Shelter I sought

Within a cave — What lights the widow’s eye?



[JONAH enters behind HEMAN.]

*Widow.*

My son ! My son ! Thank God !

[*Falls upon his neck.*]

*Heman.*

What ! Jonah here ?

Hast thou then left the prophet ? Where is he ?

What hath befallen ?

*Jonah.*

Heman, I am tired,

And never am so rich in words as thou.

Not much have I to tell, but what I have

I briefly will rehearse, if you desire.

Where then shall I begin ?

*Heman.*

I saw thee mount

The hill, Elijah leading by the hand ;

And from that time I saw nor him nor thee.

*Jonah.*

When we had reached the eastern brow, he knelt,  
Staying his breast upon a rock, and prayed  
In agony of earnestness for rain.  
Seven times, at bidding of his voice or eye,  
I went to Carmel's loftiest crest that fronts  
The western sea. Six times I only saw  
The pallid yearning of the nearer waves,  
And the keen silver-edge of stainless light  
Where sea met sky. But at the seventh, behold  
A delicate hand, fine-fingered, on that line  
Gleamed like a lily. Then I hasted back,  
And told the prophet. Quickly he arose ;  
A fiery agitation shook his frame.  
To me he spake not, but from crag to crag,  
Downhill, with giant leaps, and form that showed  
Larger than human in the gloom, he rushed  
To seek the king. I saw him gird his loins  
To run beside the royal chariot.  
I could not choose but think it had been well

If at that moment he had stayed behind,  
To keep the crowd in heart, and to present  
A front of massive strength to Jezebel.  
He went. I joined myself unto a band  
Of those true Israelites who, all that day,  
Had been most zealous on the prophet's side,  
Naboth of Jezreel chief. We slept, one watch,  
Within a sheltered wrinkling of the hill ;  
Then marched by night, and in the gray of dawn,  
About the going up to Jezreel,  
We met Elijah coming from the town.  
Oh what a change from him of yesterday !  
Haggard and worn, with trouble in his gait,  
And infinite astonishment and pain  
Within his wildly-sparkling eye. Our time  
For colloquy was brief. The sum is this :  
Ahab was in the arms of Jezebel,  
And her fierce horsemen, pouring from the town,  
Eager to slay the prophet, galloped swift  
Along the ways. Our little band broke up.

The prophet and myself ran toward the south  
Until we came to far Beersheba.  
There I sank wearied, for my strength was spent,  
And all my soul was in perplexity.  
Then turned Elijah unto me and spake :—  
“Farewell, my son ; the Lord deals wondrously  
With me his servant, and thy strength has failed ;  
Commend me to thy mother ; bid her trust  
The Care that filled the barrel and the cruse,  
The Love that gave thee to her arms from death.  
Now will I bless and kiss thee ere thou go.”—  
“Father,” I said, “thou art not angered with me  
That I have pondered deep, and wept and seemed  
Sometimes this day to heed thee not, nor hear  
Thy words? I love thee well ; my mother only,  
The widow who has watched me all my days,  
Is better loved by me. But I do fear  
This Jah too much to serve his prophet well ;  
For who can understand Him? Wherefore now  
Did not the fire that blazed upon the hill,

Flashing anew, burn up this furious band  
Of horsemen? Will not all men say that He  
Hath but one brand wherewith to smite? And then  
Will they not laugh as thou laughed'st yesterday,  
When Baal's prophets danced and cut themselves?  
But yesterday my lord, Elijah, stood  
Above the anointed King of Israel;  
Or wherefore say the King? The firmament  
Was thine to shut or open; from the sea,  
The shoreless deep, the ocean stream that takes  
The whole earth as a babe within its arms,  
I saw the white hand rise and shape itself  
Into a mighty cup, the cup of God,  
To pour down rain upon the thirsty land.  
And, lo! thou fleest from a woman's face,  
And Jezebel's least spearman mocks at Jah.  
Oh, pardon, father, but thou know'st that I  
Am from the land of Sidon. Long ago,  
My mother's kindred sailed to Ilion  
Along the purple sea with many chiefs;

And the Achaian and the Dardan kings,  
Though heathens, were clear-sighted, calm-voiced men,  
Wise to discern in earthly things ; and they  
Held always it were best for mortal men  
To walk apart from the immortal gods ;  
Laying upon their altars offerings due,  
And worshipping them reverently, all times ;  
But not aspiring to do more than this,  
Or know them face to face, or hear them speak,  
Or execute their bidding upon earth ;  
For that their language is not known to men,  
And men's thoughts are not their thoughts, nor can men  
Know what it is they want, or why they change ;  
Nurse hope, then slay it ; smite their prophet hard  
When he erects his brow to take a crown.  
Thou knowest I believe with heart and soul  
That Jah is God. The first-fruits I will bring,  
The best of all my flock will offer up,  
And every day, at morn and eve, will bend  
The knee to him. But I'm a quiet lad,

And love the cottage porch and the green shade  
Of vine, or fig, or gourd, and fain would pass  
My days in peace, and lay my mother's head  
Beneath the kindly earth. I pray thee, therefore,  
That thou would'st ask the Lord to let me be,  
For if His dreadful Voice should reach mine ear,  
I would be much afraid, and hide me close  
Within some cavern of the hill, or beg  
Sea-faring men to bear me in their ship  
To Tyrus or to Tarshish or —" — "My son,  
What boots," he said, "this talk? A fibre still  
Of the half-heathen lingers in thy heart.  
If it should please the Lord to make of thee  
One of his army — for he can — thou wilt  
Have strange experience." — "Rather not," I cried;  
"Much rather not." He blessed me, and I went.

*Heman.*

And thou did'st leave him at his utmost need?  
Oh, bitter selfishness of little men!  
Would God that I were with him now, to bring

A cup of water to his lips, or tie  
The latchet of his shoe! — And know thou this,  
Who art so very shrewd to criticize  
The doings of the Lord, that the great work  
On Carmel is not lost. The wrath, indeed,  
Of Jezebel hath driven the prophet forth;  
But Obadiah — thus much did I learn  
Before I left Samaria — hath prevailed  
Upon the king and queen, who stood in awe  
Of a great insurrection, to relax  
The sternness of the edicts which forbade  
Worship of Israel's God, and to concede  
More toleration than hath been allowed  
Since when the prophets of the Lord were slain.





ACT III.

SCENE I. *An inner chamber in AHAB'S palace.*

AHAB and JEZEBEL:

*Jezebel.*

MY lord, what is the matter? On thy brow  
I looked to see the streaks of joyful dawn,  
And it is midnight with thee. All the land  
Rings with thy name. No shout of victory,  
Exultant o'er the baffled Syrian,  
Leaps like a bright bird to the sky, but bears  
The name of Ahab on its azure wings.  
I never was so proud to call thee mine.  
In peace — my lord will pardon me — sometimes  
Thou hast been too effeminately kind  
To slaves and traitors; and no vagrant knave  
Who calls himself a prophet, and assumes

To smite thee with the word of Jah, but strikes  
A tremor through thy joints. In war alone  
Thou standest forth the hero unimpeached ;  
Brave, — ah, perhaps too passionately brave, —  
A wife may say so ; wise to plan the fight ;  
In action prompt, calm, irresistible.  
The Syrians thou hast vanquished, and their king  
Has thanked thee for his life. Yet now thou droop'st,  
And lookest with fixed eye on vacancy,  
And castest thee, all silent, on thy bed,  
And turnest from me, though I bring to thee  
A cup of purple wine. What ails my lord?

*Ahab.*

The thing will pass, my Jezebel, and yet  
It pains me shrewdly. And, in sooth, 'tis strange,  
There being many causes for great joy,  
That one small mischief should embitter all.  
But thus it is one glistening poison-drop  
On arrow-point will taint the healthy blood  
Of strongest warrior, turning it to fire

Or acrid gall, and making life one pain.  
Thou knowest Naboth's vineyard?— how it lies  
Upon the fairest slope of Jezreel's hill,  
Cleaving our garden-ground in twain? —

*Jezebel.*

I know.

What then? I half anticipate thy speech,  
And yet it seems impossible.

*Ahab.*

I met

Naboth within his vineyard, yestermorn.  
I offered him to buy his bit of land  
At its full value, or, if he preferred,  
To let him have, elsewhere, a better vineyard.

*Jezebel.*

You honored thus that peasant! Ahab, thou  
Art but an infant in thine innocence  
And soft good-nature. I have known a king,  
Who scarce had deigned to send a page to tell  
This fellow that his vineyard was required

By his anointed master. Well — what next?

*Ahab.*

He told me of his God and of His law,  
And “Jah forbid it me,” he said, “that I  
Should sell my father’s heritage.”

*Jezebel.*

He did!—

I knew it, — though it seems to laugh belief  
To bleakest scorn. I knew it, for I know  
The spirit of this people, and the vast  
And iron-fronted impudence with which  
For Jah and for his code, and for themselves,  
Who are, forsooth, his chosen, they demand  
Supremacy o’er men and gods alike.  
Oh, were I not a woman and thy wife,  
Almost methinks that I could mock thee, Ahab.  
This is the fruit of all thy moderation,  
Thy sweet conciliatory schemes, thy care  
That, when the ruffian of Gilead fled  
After the Carmel massacre, his dupes

Should have soft terms, and not, as I advised,  
Be bidden, under pain of instant death,  
Jah to renounce and bow the knee to Baal.  
You were so gentle, and your Obadiah  
So thoughtful and so wise. "The Hebrew faith" —  
I mind your reasons well — "had so deep hold  
Upon the heart and soul of Israel,  
And the wild work on Carmel had so stirred  
The popular imagination, that need were,  
Although Elijah had been forced to flee,  
For caution and concession." Take the thanks,  
Most gracious monarch, take the humble thanks  
Of subjects loyal, grateful, and obedient.  
If Naboth flouts thee, never say that I  
Taught him his lesson. — Art thou Israel's king?  
Is it a sceptre or a withered reed  
Thou holdest in thine hand? — But be at rest.  
I will refix thy wavering diadem,  
And break the neck of traitorous insolence.  
The vineyard of this Naboth shall be thine,

A little gift from thine own Jezebel.  
Thy lords expect thee at the banquet. Rise,  
Anoint thine head, put on thy royal robes,  
And haste thee to the hall. I follow soon.

[AHAB goes. JEZEBEL paces the chamber in agitation, talking with herself.]

How shall it be?—To force the pampered slave  
To come with ashes on his head and kneel  
Before the king and beg him to accept  
The vineyard? No; that were not half enough;  
My vengeance still would yearn like famished wolf,  
Balked of its prey.—To strike him to the ground  
By javelin-thrust from a sure hand, and while  
He wriggled in the spasms of death, to yell  
This in his ear, “The vineyard is the king’s”?  
No, no: revenge is hungry still, for thus  
No fine humiliation lights upon  
The law and power of that same Jah whom he  
Invoked as his protector.—Ha! I have it!

Yes, yes — now let me see — I have it clear.  
Naboth shall die, in all the people's sight,  
For blasphemy against this very Jah  
In whom he trusts. The elders of his town  
Shall be my ministers. O sweet revenge  
Beyond all precedent! To mock the man, —  
To set him high and then to hurl him low, —  
To make him feel, while blackness wraps his soul,  
That his Jehovah hath forsaken him!  
This will be vengeance worthy of my sire.  
The faction will guess well what means the blow,  
And abject terror will invade their hearts  
And chill the marrow in their bones. — Ho! boy,  
Bid Azim to attend me instantly.

[*She writes vehemently upon her tablets. AZIM enters.*]

*Azim.*

I wait on your command, most gracious queen.

*Jezebel.*

Azim, once more I do entrust to thee  
An urgent task. The King of Israel  
Hath been subjected to vile contumely  
By an audacious underling, who thinks  
That the outworn and childish laws of Jah  
Shall thwart the royal wish. Such treasonous fools  
Must with swift stroke be smitten on the head,  
Even to perishing. These letters here  
Set forth the time and manner. Bear them, thou,  
In thine own hand to Jezreel, and there  
Commit them to the elders with this word ;  
“The slightest deviation from the sense,  
Or softening of the sentence, shall bring down  
The scathing wrath of Ahab and of me  
Upon their town.” The royal hand and seal  
Attest them.

*Azim.*

I shall do thy will, O Queen.



SCENE III. *Jezreel. An inner chamber in the house of the CHIEF ELDER. The dead of night. The CHIEF ELDER, GERSHOM; MILCHI and EHUD. AZIM attends.*

*Chief Elder.*

Brethren, ye have been summoned at this hour  
By express mandate from the king and queen.  
The royal messenger, the valiant Azim,  
Will state his errand.

*Azim.*

Elders, I have come  
To put these letters in your hands. 'Tis yours  
To give them carefullest consideration.  
So please you, I withdraw.

*Chief Elder.*

Yes, Azim, go.  
Yet leave not, pray, the house. It may befall  
That we shall need thy counsel presently.

[AZIM *withdraws and the door is shut.*

With your consent, I break the seal and read

These letters. They are written in the name  
Of Ahab, but I think I know the hand  
That it is not the king's. What say'st thou, Ehud?  
Thou know'st the royal writing, king's and queen's.

*Ehud.*

The writing is Queen Jezebel's.

*All.*

Ah, then,

The words are tongues of fire. Let us beware.

*Chief Elder reads.*

“King Ahab greets the elders bearing rule  
In Jezreel. In your town there lives a man,  
Called Naboth, who hath grievously reviled  
The queen and me. Him therefore shall ye bring  
To condign punishment. Ye shall proclaim  
A solemn fast, and ye shall set the man  
In highest place, and bid him read the law  
And teach the people. But ye shall look out  
Men fitted for the purpose, who shall come,  
When he is in his glory, lifted up,

With all eyes fixed upon him, and shall swear  
That he has Jah blasphemed and cursed the king.  
Then shall ye stone him until he be dead,  
According to the law. Be prompt. Farewell.”  
Such are the letters. Brethren, speak your minds.

[*No one speaks for some minutes.*]

*Milchi.*

I wonder not that we have sat in silence.  
The business is most painful. Might we not  
Call Azim in again? If fame speaks truth,  
He knows the mind of Jezebel as few.  
He can apprise us whether she hath set  
Her heart unchangeably upon this thing.

*Ehud.*

No use of that. Mere waste of time. The queen  
Knows her own mind, which is, perhaps, too much  
To say for some.

*Chief Elder.*

I do agree with Milchi.

No harm can come of knowing if the queen  
Is likely to take vengeance deep should we  
Make bold to disobey her, or, at least,  
To practise some evasion of the last  
And sternest penalty that law exacts  
While seeming to obey her.

*Ehud.*

I shall not talk. Have Azim in. Despatch.

[AZIM enters.]

*Chief Elder.*

We have read the letters, Azim, of the queen, —  
I mean the king — your pardon, — but the hour  
Is late, and I am weary. We would know  
If that our sovereign and his royal spouse  
Have set their very hearts upon this thing.  
Their will, we need not say, is law to us :  
But think'st thou, Captain, if we were to send,  
In deepest humbleness and loyalty,  
Our joint petition to their Majesties,  
To seek in this some other instruments,

Or somewhat mitigate the punishment,  
That they would heed our prayer?

*Azim.*

Elders, I know

That if ye hesitate one day, one hour,  
To do the bidding of these letters, ye  
And your fair town shall feel the utmost wrath  
Of Ahab and of Jezebel.

*Ehud.*

Of course !

*Chief Elder.*

We thank thee, Azim, and within an hour  
We give to thee our message to bear back  
Unto Samaria. [AZIM *withdraws.*

Now, what shall we do?

*Ehud.*

The bidding of the queen. The man must die ;  
And we must be his murderers. That is all.

*Chief Elder.*

Ehud, you put it coarsely, — far too coarsely.

It is not thus by any means the thing  
Presents itself to me. There is, no doubt,  
A deviation from the regular course  
In bringing Naboth thus to punishment.  
But are we not, as loyal subjects, bound  
To deem it certain that the king and queen  
Have perfect knowledge of his wickedness?  
When I can satisfy myself that justice  
Is done substantially, I can wink  
At some irregularity of means.

*Ehud.*

Ha ! ha !

Well, I am bad enough, but not so bad  
As your high reverence sitting there aloft,  
Sublime. I take my conscience by the throat,  
When it rebels, and choke it. For the time  
It lies as dead ; but when it does revive,  
It can perform its office healthfully.  
Your conscience is so drunken and bemused,  
So drugged with plausibilities and lies,

That it has ceased to know the right from wrong.  
Naboth blaspheme his God and curse his king !  
When, when my olives yield me hemlock juice,  
And my cow brings forth adders. No, my friends,  
Naboth has angered Jezebel, and dies.  
I cannot save him, but I shall not lay  
A stain upon his honorable name.

*Chief Elder.*

Ehud, your frankness I admire, and smile  
At what is personal in your remarks.  
You take this up too sharply. Truth to speak,  
Both you and Naboth lack one precious thing, —  
Discretion, moderation, due regard  
For the unwritten law, the unseen nudge,  
The hint to yield when yielding is your game,  
Which he who cannot take is sure to be  
Dead-beaten some day in the social squeeze.  
Let us be practical in this affair.  
Grant that we would not, of ourselves, have sought  
Occasion against Naboth : very well :

This proves that we are but the hands or tools  
Of those who really slay him. At the worst  
Here is a different thing from murdering him,  
As Ehud puts it ; — let us be exact.  
But I will speak as plain as Ehud does,  
And show him that he stands not quite alone,  
A pillar white of salt veracity,  
Reproving our defections. Tell me this, —  
Has not friend Naboth been a trouble to us ?  
I nudge the sides of wise men — take the hint.  
For my part, frankly, I do love not well  
To feel that eagle eye on all I do.  
Doth Moses let us muzzle up the ox  
That treadeth out the corn ? Good Milchi, you  
And I and Ehud have a natural right  
To put a toothsome morsel now and then  
Between our lips in all this public toil.  
I see you comprehend me, Milchi ; thanks  
For that intelligent and kindly smile ;  
It much encourageth me. To be brief :



Jezreel will be a far more pleasant place  
When this oppressively high-minded man,  
This lily-fingered, virtuous personage,  
Has been disposed of by Queen Jezebel.

*Milchi.*

I most sincerely thank thee for thy words ;  
They have brought sweetest comfort to my mind,  
Judicious Gershom. At the first, I own,  
The thing looked rather black ; but now new light  
Dawns over it. He is a painful man,  
Deny it whoso list, — this Naboth is, —  
To have in any city : apt to speak  
In sharp tones, wounding sensibilities  
Finer perhaps than his ; unable quite,  
In matters of morality and truth,  
To comprehend a motive if it lies  
Beneath the surface, and its nature is  
Involved and subtle ; fiercely positive  
That you must never sign a compromise  
'Tween truth and falsehood. Now I love to see

Lies standing janitors at gate of truth,  
Clad in her livery and serving her.  
Look round the land ; I ask you, could we have  
So much of purest truth from Jah's own Book,  
Preached everywhere, but for the compromise  
So recently effected between Baal  
And Israel's Jehovah? Many men,  
Of rank and influence famed upon the coast  
Of Tyre and Sidon, thus have been induced  
To listen to the truth, and who can tell  
What good has thus been done? All settlement  
Has drawbacks, I admit ; but tell me, pray,  
Where is perfection? Now this Naboth lacks,  
As Gershom beautifully did explain,  
That gift and grace, so fruitful in dear peace,  
In light, in sweetness, in the honey-dew  
Of bright tranquillity for home and heart,  
Accommodation. The fierce Gileadite  
Who shouted " God or Baal " from Carmel's head  
Has no more thorough-going partisan

Than Naboth. Such a man is dangerous,  
And most of all in times like ours, when minds  
Are much divided on important points.  
I should be very pleased, myself, to see  
Jah's worship universal, and his rite  
Alone permitted ; but the royal league  
With Tyrus and the influence paramount  
Of our Sidonian queen forbid the thought.  
Make, then, the most of things. This policy,  
This compromise with Baal and Ashtoreth,  
Seems really to have won for Israel  
The aid of several rival deities.  
Hence, probably, the victories of late  
Gained over Syria, and the peace and wealth,  
And safety from invasion, we enjoy  
In this our Jezreel. But I grant that these  
Are minor benefits ; and what I most  
Insist upon is that in spiritual things,  
In high religious matters, much is gained  
By moderation and by acquiescence.

Will any candid, reasonable man  
Affirm that there is honor done to God,  
When crazy Heman and a half-starved knot  
Of rebel hill-men, meeting in some hole  
Among the rocks, sing hymns, and pray, and raise  
Elijah's cry, and swear they never will  
Bow down to Baal, — honor done, I say,  
To God by these ill-mannered, vehement men,  
So great as that which doth redound to him  
From the decorous, regulated rites  
Which law permits us here in Jezreel?  
Well, now, what is the upshot of all this?  
Plainly, that our precise and captious friend,  
Who can be also fiercely hot at times,  
This undisguised, unflinching partisan  
Of the old faith and worship, constitutes  
A serious danger to the town. I ask,  
Is it not better that one citizen,  
This Naboth, should be sacrificed, than that  
The whole of Jezreel should be visited

With Jezebel's displeasure? Let one man  
Die, then, for all the people.

*Chief Elder.*

Milchi, thou  
Hast wisely spoken. So we are agreed.  
Friend Ehud, thou canst doubtless find two men  
Who will enact the form which Jezebel  
Hath so precisely specified, — I mean,  
Will bear the witness that shall be required.

*Ehud.*

May all the gods that strive for this poor land,  
With Satan to assist, torment my soul  
And vex my body, if I do this thing !  
You rather kill brave Naboth than forego  
The patronage of Jezebel and Ahab  
For this your town. The pious Milchi here  
Stands better with the palace than myself,  
And hath more property in Jezreel.  
Let him arrange the business.

*Milchi.*

Really, now,  
This is impossible ; for my acquaintance,  
Even to its farthest limit, is confined  
To persons of respectability.  
Of course I could inquire and look abroad ;  
But then the time is short. A knowing head  
And cunning hand are needed for this work.  
The common people, I have often marked,  
Are much in love with Naboth.

*Ehud.*

Gershom, then.

He can at any moment lay his hand  
Upon a brace of robbers or of thieves,  
Who, for the regular price, will swear away  
The life of honest men. Since Baal came in,  
Such ware has always come to market quick, —  
Supply to meet demand.

*Chief Elder.*

I call this hard.

But if I must, I must. I undertake  
To manage the affair. Bid Azim come.

[AZIM enters.]

Azim, convey unto the king and queen  
Our humble thanks for their most gracious words,  
And for the signal trust reposed in us.  
Their high commands we shall, with utmost speed,  
And nicest accuracy, execute.

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SCENE IV. *The Queen's Chamber in the royal palace  
at Samaria.*

JEZEBEL and AZIM.

*Azim.*

The elders humbly promise, gracious queen,  
To do thy bidding and the king's at once.  
Ere that a week hath fled, this man will die.  
But pardon me that I do hint a doubt  
Whether the step is altogether wise.  
All will, I trust, be well ; — but yet, but yet —

*Jezebel.*

Doubt me no doubts, friend Azim, nor subdue  
Your soldier's voice from battle shout and chant  
Of victory to murmuring "yet, but yet."  
I tell thee that this people must be taught  
Obedience and submission. Do you say  
That since the mitigation of the laws  
Against the worship of the Hebrew God,  
They have been loyal, and with one accord  
Of smiling dauntlessness have put to flight  
The Syrian armies? Why, even children cease  
To stamp and beat the nurse when all they want  
Is yielded to their cries. Those murders foul  
Done upon Carmel should have been avenged  
With sternest justice ; but, instead of that,  
They were rewarded. The soft-hearted king,  
Worked on by Obadiah, gave full scope  
To the old superstitions of the land ;  
And now, of course, these same are made a perch  
On which most insolent peasants take their stand,



To peck our eyes out. Come, no more, I beg,  
Of this vile Naboth. I am glad at heart.  
Let us be merry for an hour ; I see  
Luli approaching, and he leads with him  
My little niece, who came, but three weeks back,  
From Tyrus.

[LULI and ELISSA enter.]

Well, Elissa, where have you  
And Luli been love-making all this time?

*Elissa.*

Oh, no, dear aunt, we have not been love-making,  
But Luli has been very good to me,  
And shown me the king's horses, and the flowers  
About the fountain.

*Jezebel.*

And do they outshine  
The flowers of Tyrus blooming by the sea?  
Are they as bright as those around thy home?

*Elissa.*

Not quite so bright, dear aunt, not quite, I think,

And not so many of them, oh, not near !

*Jezebel.*

I fear you will not do for court, Elissa ;  
You cannot flatter.

*Elissa.*

But Sichæus says,  
Dear aunt, that we should never fail to speak  
The very truth ; and surely he is right,  
For he is high-priest unto Herakles.

*Jezebel.*

Oh, you quaint, knowing thing ! — and has Sichæus  
Been teaching you already ? Little bride,  
You must not yet with bridal earnestness  
Bind your young brow. Although thou art betrothed  
Unto Sichæus, he is not thy lord,  
And thou must show him that thou still art free.

*Elissa.*

Ah, but Sichæus is so kind, so wise,  
So tender with me.

*Jezebel.*

What, in love at ten,  
You artless-artful, funny little maid?  
A model woman cut in ivory,  
Of tiny size, but perfect at all points.  
Come, kiss me. Sing us now your little song,  
Demurely sentimental, like yourself.

[*Elissa sings.*]

Leave the bonny bubble floating,  
Faint, fair, and gay,  
Leave the bonny bubble floating,  
Leave, leave, I say.

On the bonny bubble floating  
Gaze while you may,  
Crimson, orange, pearly, golden,  
Brighter than day.

Leave the bonny bubble floating,  
Oh, could it stay!  
Look, a wandering wind hath smote it,  
Gone, gone for aye!

*Jezebel.*

Was ever little girl so mournful-wise!

Luli, I'm sure this is a wonder-child ;  
You poets will all sing of her, one day.  
You're but a minstrel, not a rhythmic seer,  
Or you would tell us how it all will be :  
What dainty woes shall fill those eyes with tears ;  
What magic cave will glimmer on her love ;  
What hero she will greet with calm, proud brow  
And gentle scorn, till he despair and die ;  
What stalking warrior's glozing tales will pierce  
Her guarded bosom. Will she stand at eve,  
When the cold moonbeams kiss the shivering sea,  
All nature silent round her, while she weeps,  
Gazing on one black ship, that slowly glides  
Into the farther gloom and heeds her not?

But we shall think no more of these things now :  
Another kiss, my mimic heroine ; and, here —  
I shall not ask thee if thy Tyrian grapes  
Outbloom this cluster, but the Eshcol vines  
Are commonly held worthy of the taste  
Of kings or gods.

*Elissa.*

Oh, thank you, aunt, so many !

I like the grapes of Eshcol.

*Jezebel.*

Now enough

Of this. A touch of livelier song to tune

The air to gay vibration. Luli, come —

[*Luli sings.*]

The Sea, the Sea, the gray old Sea,  
What a merry and brave old heart has he !  
A fellow of infinite jest and whim,  
And nothing can come amiss to him.  
If the winds are hushed, he cares not, he,  
He can sleep till they wake, whensoever that be,  
With his head on the grand piled clouds of dawn,  
And his feet where the evening's veils are drawn.  
He can sleep, all silent, without a breath,  
So smiling-placid, like happy death.  
Do you think him dead ? Let Westwind try  
With the tiniest toe-stroke passing by ;  
He flashes awake, but not angry, no !  
He never mistakes a pat for a blow.  
That he's somewhat dull, we must admit,  
No jest so old but he laughs at it ;  
So when Westwind comes with her dainty kick

The laugh-light breaks through his eyelids quick,  
And a million million rippings twinkle,  
Each a smile, though each a wrinkle.  
For he loves as well as when first 'twas seen  
The dance of the waves in their gold and green, —  
Those robes, which the waves have worn so long  
That they're too old-fashioned for modern song, —  
The dance of the young waves, boys and girls,  
With clapping of hands and tossing of curls,  
And leaping and sweeping in breathless glee,  
No leaves of the forest e'er tossed so free;  
No flowers of the garden e'er gleamed so bright  
As the changing tints on their garlands white,  
Their garlands of spray with rainbow glows,  
Glinting of sapphire, blushing of rose,  
Melting of violet, softly fair,  
Scarlet of poppy and tulip rare,  
Magical glimpses of varying flame,  
Only in beauty ever the same.  
And the dancers tire not, the day live-long,  
Nor music they want but the Westwind's song;  
And they never tire through the livelong night,  
But flash and whirl in the pale moonlight.  
And then, when the grim winds wake and say  
They hate this nonsense of young folks' play,  
"I'm ready, I'm ready," old Ocean jeers,  
"I'll fight as I've fought you these thousand years,  
You ruffian Northwind scowling there,

Take your hand, d'ye hear, out of my white hair !  
Ha ! that was a buffet between my eyes,  
But the harder you hit the higher I rise.  
The clouds rush down, and the moon on high .  
Glides off in fear to the farther sky ;  
In the murk I kindle lights of my own,  
From the charging surges' white crests thrown.  
The lightning I quench in the sea-trough hoar,  
And the thunder I drown with a louder roar.  
And as long as the wild winds like the fight  
I never shall furl my banners white.  
Their trumpets are loud and their breath is tough,  
But they always have first cried, ' Hold, enough ! '  
And after their baffled squadrons yield,  
I roam for a time about the field ;  
A little I moan above the dead,  
And smooth down each warrior's ruffled head ;  
But as soon as the bugles of peace are blown,  
And the golden clouds step gently down,  
I laugh as before, and arrange again  
That young folks' dance on the wide sea plain."

*Jezebel.*

Leave winds and waves to youngling minstrels, Luli ;  
The human heart requires the human theme,  
That makes us fell our nature's kinsmanship.

[*Luli sings.*]

The joys that are so old  
Yet ever, ever young! —  
The soft hand's trembling hold,  
The glance half-shy, half-bold,  
The stammering story told  
    When the stars looked down,  
    When the stars looked down;  
By the cedar in the dell,  
In the cleft beside the well,  
In the vine-bower's secret cell,  
    When the heart was young,  
    When the heart was young;  
And the accents, faint and broken,  
And the vow in whispers spoken,  
And the bosom's better token  
    As we clasped and clung,  
    As we clasped and clung;  
Oh, the joy that is so olden,  
Yet is young, young, young!

*Jezebel.*

Better ; a little better ; but not good.

*Luli.*

Queen Jezebel, you ought to be the Queen  
Of the nine daughters of Mnemosyne ;



My minstrel skill is all too rude for thee.

*Jezebel.*

Luli, you poets are a spindling race ;  
Unless you're praised, you hang your heads and pout  
Like my pet bird when, just to tease the thing,  
I snatch from it sweet raisins that it loves.  
Suppose I send to Argos, o'er the sea,  
For some philosopher, some sagest man,  
To teach us wisdom and to bright our wits  
With reding oracles of destiny ;  
And you go back to Sidon whence you came ?  
We ought to learn the destiny of man,  
And those same sages know it, do they not ?

[*Luli sings.*]

Man breathes and grows ; he waxes, wanes,  
Has lover's pleasures, lover's pains ;  
His sons grow up ; he droops, he dies :  
Now tell me more than this, ye wise !

A faintly-glimmering meteor spark  
One moment flits 'tween dark and dark,

In darkness born, in darkness dies :  
Now tell me more than this, ye wise !

He ripens and ripens, he rots and rots,\*  
And that's the sum of human lots,  
He struts, aspires — and there he lies :  
Now tell me more than this, ye wise !

A smile from love-lit deeps of blue  
In eye of maiden warm and true,  
A touch of dance, a breath of song,  
Will help us drive the years along :  
But take your cobwebs from the skies,  
Ye worst of triflers, called the wise !

*Jezebel.*

There's sense in that, if not much melody.  
But keep the wine-cup circling. Luli, friend,  
I pledge thee. In the mantling lights that play  
Upon the foam of a bright cup of wine  
Is more of life's intense philosophy  
Than in ten systems of those pompous fools.

---

\* Hamlet.

[*Luli sings.*]

Never say that love is false,  
Ye who know its rapture,  
Though you weep to think you will  
Nevermore recapture  
Ravishment as when at first  
On your heart the splendor burst.

Never say that love is false,  
Maiden slowly dying,  
Dying of a broken heart,  
Pale and languid lying :  
That same pain by which you die  
Measureth love's ecstasy.

*Azim.*

Something too much of love, I think, although  
There always hath been league 'twixt love and war.  
Have you no green leaf for the soldier's brow?

[*Luli sings.*]

"Look," said Benhadad, "if the splintered light,  
Flashing from three-score thousand burnished helms,  
Blind not your eye-ball; look, unless ye shrink.  
The hills are white with tents, the chariots prance,  
The banners bright of two and thirty kings  
Float on the dallying breeze. That host is mine.

And there," he pointed, with a snort of scorn,  
"A-tremble on its little scarpèd hill  
Lies your Samaria. Follow with your eye  
The few gaunt forms that creep along the streets.  
Tell me, ye Hebrew Elders, tell me plain,  
If all yon town, the walls, the temples, roots,  
With Ahab and his warriors to boot,  
Were pounded into dust, would they suffice  
To yield one handful unto each of these!"  
He set his turban, laughed his laugh, then strode  
Into his tent, and called the vassal kings  
To quaff the sparkling wine.

A splendid smile,  
Like sword-blade flashing from a jewelled sheath,  
Broke o'er the face of Ahab when he heard.  
"Contemptuous king, I thank thee; thou hast touched  
Our Elders to the quick, and now they grant  
Its full sweep to my sword-arm."

On the wall  
Clustered pale women, holding starveling babes,  
And ancient men bowed down with weight of years;  
And, leaning on a turret by the gate,  
I watched what might befall.

The sun, dim red,  
Was bending towards the west. Benhadad still  
Sat in his white pavilion, banqueting.  
From the great court of his palace marched King Ahat;  
Afoot he marched, no gold upon his brow;  
And yet a crown was there: each man that stepped

To measured music, timbrel, flute, and harp,  
In the close ranks behind him, knew right well  
A crown was there; each felt the quickening sense  
Of a king-soldier's leadership, that hour.  
Close-lipped, calm-browed, in massive strength of limb,  
Of lofty height, with vigilant great eyes,  
A lion-skin across his shoulders thrown,  
Marched Ahab. Once I saw him start and pant,  
When his glance fell upon the haggard throng  
Beside me on the wall, but then his eye,  
With a fierce hungry glare in it, shot straight  
Across the valley to the Syrian foe,  
And he smiled, grimly calm. The gate flew wide;  
And, firmly treading, stern, in solemn joy,  
The slender columns marched beyond the wall.  
There went the chosen youth of Israel,  
Twelve-score, all princely born, well-skilled in war,  
And trained to smiling fortitude in fight.  
Steadily stepping, patiently, not fast,  
In purple mantles clad, to those clear tones  
Of music, on they went. 'These men are mad,'  
Benhadad cried; 'this puny company  
Leaving the shelter of their walls and towers.  
See that ye hem them round, but smite them not;  
Take them alive and have them for a mock!'   
He reeled back to the wine-cup, laughing loud.

Steadily moves the slender column; now  
Its head has crossed the vale and touched the hill.

Steadily on and up ! The sword of Ahab  
Has tasted blood ; among the Syrians  
There is a rushing and a wondering,  
And once, and twice, a warrior dashes wild  
To take his death-stab on that stinging line.  
But all the kings are banqueting ; and kings  
Are captains in this host ; and rule is none.  
Through the wild sea of men and chariots  
Still steady, steady, pushing up the hill  
March Ahab and his column. Now they reach  
The top ; then halt. The column is six deep,  
Forming six files when halted, facing north.  
Three wheel to westward ; three to eastward wheel,  
And thus two lines, three deep, face east and west,  
Cutting the Syrian host in two. King Ahab  
Takes the command of that which faces west,  
Where lie Benhadad and his riotous kings.  
Our Azim heads the eastward-facing line.  
Forward at once go both in diverse ways,  
Forward against that weltering, tossing crowd,  
Where chariots crash on footmen, horses rush  
In maddened terror, and a storm of sounds,  
Shouts, yells, screams, curses on the revelling kings,  
Shakes the astonished air. But forward still,  
Like two bright sickles among shaken reeds,  
Go the thin Hebrew lines. At length the din  
Startled those drunken revellers with the king.  
They staggered forth, and some, whom fumes of wine  
Had made audacious, to their chariots leaped

And charged the line. But their unsteady arms  
Could aim no javelin straight; the naked swords  
And blood-red mantles of the Hebrew ranks  
Dazzled their eyes; and, with a ringing shout,  
That reached us where we stood upon the wall,  
The Hebrew warriors sprang on them and hurled  
Chariots and riders over the steep cliffs.

Benhadad now was sobered from a fool  
Into a coward. Looking on the hills,  
Where his great host was writhing like a snake  
In agonies of death, and glancing next  
Upon the plain, where wary Obadiah  
With the main army of the Israelites,  
Seven thousand men, all eager for the fray,  
Was following up the triumph of the van,  
He saw that all was lost, and mounting quick  
His swiftest horse, and winding round the hill,  
First westward and then bending towards the east,  
Fled like a dastard.

When the setting sun  
Threw his soft lances of sweet mellow light  
Along the hills that gird Samaria,  
The air was silent but for frolic din  
Of girlish laughter, and the jubilant shouts  
Of those who ran from tent to tent and searched  
For wine, and bread, and gold, and jewellery.\*

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\* 1 Kings xx. 15-21.

*Azim.*

Luli, you have surprised me, I confess.  
I am a soldier, — never will pretend  
To judge of minstrelsy, but this I say,  
That I, who fought that day, have never known  
So well as now the manner of the fight  
And the true causes of the victory.  
A poet has his uses, I perceive.

*[Luli sings.]*

No warrior he, no judge, no king,  
But he gives a voice to everything.  
He makes the flutter of a bird  
Immortal in a spoken word,  
And sets the murmur of the shore  
To human woe for evermore,  
And tells the bosom's inmost feeling  
In crimson words, like blood-drops stealing.

*Jezebel.*

And have you no word, Luli, of our home,  
Of my dear Sidon and Mount Lebanon?

*[Luli sings.]*

A hand of beauty laid among the waves,  
Bearing a massive jewel tenderly,



A hand of marble which the blue sea laves,  
Gliding to kiss it softly, silverly,  
A radiant jewel, flashing haughtily  
From myriad facets gleams of pearly light,  
Which weary mariners with rapture see,  
When to their eyes, that moisten at the sight,  
The fair hand lifts sweet Sidon's roofs and turrets bright.

What means this gently outstretched, jewelled hand?

What music hath it for a poet's ear?

Is it an emblem hard to understand?

Or is its meaning delicately clear?

It links the earth and sea in friendship dear,  
Seeking the ancient hatred to allay,

Hatred and terror of the ocean drear,  
Of dismal wave, black tempest, lashing spray,  
And claiming the broad sea for man's most spacious way.

It beckons from the East, autumnal, calm,

In signalled greeting to the vernal West,

Proffering amity with gracious palm,

And interchange of what each hath of best,

Not only cedar from the mountain's crest,

And gem and fruit and vase and broidery,

But thoughts that thrill the brain and warm the breast,

Religion's lore, and wisdom's mystery,

And all that melts and glows in tear-dewed sympathy.

And in fair Sidon's wave-girt streets a hum

Of many mingling voices greets the ear.

Hither, with costliest burdens, merchants come  
From the far Orient, where the day-beam clear  
First strikes the world, and, meeting them, draw near  
Strange painted wanderers, clad in wolf-skin vest,  
With wild blue eyes, devoid of guile or fear,  
Who bring their tin from Islands of the West,  
Where the tired sun sinks down on ocean's heaving breast.

Here, with keen lip and ever-sparkling eye,  
Trips the Achaian, bird of humankind;  
Here stalks in melancholy musing by  
The grave Egyptian, whose entrancéd mind  
Dreams ever of the peace it thinks to find  
In the eternal pyramid's cold heart.

The vigilant Hebrew looks before, behind,  
Solemn, adroit, prepared for every part,  
Egyptian in the fane, Achaian in the mart.

Leave we the streets; the city's gates unfold;  
Break the soft flames of twice ten thousand flowers,  
Melodious light in splendor manifold,  
Where rose-clad alleys lead to plaited bowers,  
And love and gladness speed the enchanted hours,  
When in the lucid morn blue shade is thrown  
Far o'er the gardened plain and city's towers,  
From the proud mountain's summit, rising lone,  
The white marmoreal crest of stately Lebanon.

By paths of verdure winding under banks  
Of daisied grass and scented herbage rare,  
And placid mulberries in terraced ranks,

And gray-green olives, set in order fair,  
Slowly we rise through the keen mountain air,  
Emerging on some grandly beetling brow,  
While the bold breeze lifts laughingly our hair,  
And oak and pine strike up around us now,  
And the old cedar spreads his tranquil, fan-like bough.  
Fantastic masonry of chiselled crags,  
Sculptured by torrents in capricious glee,  
That leap, the winter long, from clefts and jags,  
With eddying storms in giant revelry,  
Features the mountain; nature's blazonry,  
Rude though sublime: we turn away from such,  
To seek a finer, subtler industry;  
Nor can colossal Nature please us much,  
Compared with nature's lord's, with man's consummate touch.  
Yon eagle, floating in majestic rest  
Above the chasm profound in middle air,  
Dropped he the seed on yonder giddy crest  
Of peering crag to grow in beauty there,  
Amid the precipices gaunt and bare,  
Helming the grim cliff with its tender green?  
Ah no! its sweet smile answers human care!  
More honorably bright its emerald sheen  
Than ever warrior's helm in battle's tempest seen.  
The broad-leafed fig-tree's tendrils gently grasp  
The rock-walls of the pinnacled ravine,  
The vine's insinuating fingers clasp  
The netted wrinklins where the frost hath been;

O'er torrent foam the pine bridge hangs serene,  
From cliff to cliff in calm ærial poise ;  
The nestling village in the cleft is seen,  
And all about the mountain is a noise  
Of snow-fed waters mingling with the human voice.

The busy woodmen work in banded throngs,  
From dell to dell the axe rings cheerily,  
Making sweet discord with their choral songs ;  
The hushed wail of the everlasting sea  
Blends with the forest's music plaintively ;  
Far down the smooth cerulean main is seen,  
And, slumbering there in bright serenity,  
Like mighty sea-snakes, streams of varying sheen,  
Rich purple, rippling azure, clear, translucent green.

The sun draws near his evening goal ; his beams  
With yellow lustre paint the cedar bough,  
Dapple the russet sward with stealthy gleams,  
And delicately touch the mountain's brow ;  
Its white head hath a golden aureole now ;  
Then sinks the night. Lo ! o'er the harbor bar  
Glides the small ship with enterprising prow,  
And treads the watery waste to lands afar,  
Lifting an eye of hope to Sidon's Polar Star.

*Jezebel.*

The features, Luli, not the face ; and yet

I thank thee that, with reverent accuracy,  
Thou hast the features followed ;\* as I look,

\* Except that the ancient forests of cedar have disappeared from Mount Lebanon, and with them the woodmen who played a conspicuous part among the busy tenants of the mountain in the days of Ahab, and that the peaks are now for the most part crowned with convents, the appearance of the hill, as described by modern travellers, is doubtless closely correspondent to that which it presented to the eyes of Luli. Lebanon is about 10,000 feet high, and the summit, during the greater part of the year, is clothed with snow. "The line of cultivation," says a writer, quoted in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, "runs along at the height of about 6,000 feet; and below this the features of the western slopes are entirely different. The descent is gradual; but is everywhere broken by precipices and towering rocks which time and the elements have chiselled into strange fantastic shapes. Ravines of singular wildness and grandeur furrow the whole mountain-side, looking in many places like huge rents. Here and there, too, bold promontories shoot out, and dip perpendicularly into the bosom of the Mediterranean. The rugged limestone banks are scantily clothed with the evergreen oak and sandstone with pines; while every available spot is carefully cultivated. The cultivation is wonderful, and shows what all Syria might be if under a good government. Miniature fields of grain are often seen where one would suppose the eagles alone, which hover round them, could have planted the seed. Fig-trees cling to the naked rock; vines are trained along narrow ledges; long ranges of mulberries, on terraces like steps of stairs, cover the more gentle declivities; and

A sweet light mantles through them ; memory  
Kindles again the loveliness I loved.

*Elissa.*

Remember, Luli, that I have your promise  
To take me to the grove with you to-night,  
To hear the new hymn you have made in praise  
Of mighty Baal and of Ashtoreth.

*Jezebel.*

Luli, let's hear the hymn before you go.

[*Luli sings.*]

I.

Leaps upon the top of Lebanon  
The young, magnificent Baal.  
He throws back the mists like a cloak  
Floating behind him, fringed with gold.  
His eye sends glances of white fire  
Up the sky-roof.

The mountain feels his step,  
And shivers through all its woods ;  
The torrents hear his voice,  
And awake from sleep.

Encircling Lebanon's crown of snow,  
The sky is ruddy fire

dense groves of olives fill up the bottoms of the glens. Hundreds  
of villages are seen," etc.

## II.

Sees him, from her disconsolate couch,  
Sees him, from her snowy pillows,  
Through her chill frozen tears ;  
Hears his shout in the heavens,  
Hears his chariot among the clouds ;  
The beautiful pale Ashtoreth.

He has come !

He has come !

Her heart thrills,  
Her pale-blue eyes open,  
A faint blush, — faint, faint, —  
Overspreads her countenance.

Little white flowerets peep, down-drooping  
Pale golden flowerets, or pearly blue ;  
Beautiful all, but faint and frail :  
Spring's first wan flush upon down and dale.

Then she draws again her curtains close,  
She hides in her breast her secret joy,  
She sees him as if she saw him not.

The faint flowers die ;  
Crocus and snowdrop fail ;  
And Ashtoreth slitteth  
Coy and shy,  
Behind the curtains of hail.

## III.

But Baal is awake, awake,  
Love warmeth his heart like wine,  
Love flames in his eye like wrath :  
And he yokes to his car young lions,  
Young lions and eagles strong.  
He calls to his love,  
He speaks in song ;  
His words are the rays  
Of the ruddy-golden morn,  
To melody streaming forth.

## IV.

She will not hear ;  
She is shy, she is coy ;  
She trembles, she weeps  
In the piercing thrills  
Of her mighty joy.

## V.

But this is a lover who knows to win,  
Knoweth the ways of a woman's heart,  
Knoweth the wiles of a woman's eye.  
He comes not, he, with a downcast look,  
He comes not, he, with a pleading sigh.  
" I love thee, I love thee, and that same power  
That makes me thy slave shall make me thy king ;  
Ha ! ha ! can the pale Earth shun the hour  
When her veins must burn with the life of spring ? "



Then his splendor falls on her in a shower  
Of quickening fire, and the soft winds sing,  
And the world breaks into an infinite dower  
Of gladness and life and blossoming,  
Of love and of light and blossoming.

## VI.

Fair is she in her mantle blue,  
Fair is she in her kirtle green,  
Beautiful, beautiful, falleth low  
Her veil of the filmy, fine-streaked cloud,  
White as the driven snow.  
This is Ashtoreth,  
This is the Bride of Baal.

## VII.

Toss the joy o'er a thousand hills,  
Gleaming with scarlet poppies,  
Tenderly shed it along the vales  
In millions of azure lilies.  
Birds, as ye float on the fragrant air,  
Taking the gleam on breast and wing,  
Winnow it over field and town,  
Over the broad bright world.  
Lion that stalketh under the reeds,  
Leopard that loveth the cedar shade,  
Silvery-bearded, jocund goat,  
Soft-eyed, delicate-footed fawn,  
Come to the wedding, come.

## VIII.

Joy, joy is the law of the world;

Who will not dance at this bridal feast?

Who will come near with a sigh profane?

Who will come nigh with a blasphemous tear?

Joy at the bridal of Sun and Earth,

Joy at the marriage of Light and Life;

Who will not joy must die.

Youth or maiden, sire or spouse,

Cold of heart and dark of brow,

Who joys not now must die.

The summer gladness wraps the world,

Baal rejoices in Asthoreth,

Rejoice, all men, or die.

*Luli.*

Come now, my little princess, to the grove.

[LULI and ELISSA take leave. As LULI goes, he talks  
low with himself, aside.]

How strange this woman is! How drearily,  
For all her strained attempts at merriment,  
The slow hours dragged. She looks, methinks, as one  
Who glories in some deed of wickedness,  
Some victory of cruelty and pride,

Yet finds that conquering pride is conquering pain.  
She is not what she was when first I came.  
More stern, more proud. The dewdrops, vanishing,  
Have left her beauty arid, fierce, and hard.  
Her eye to-night gleams with a ghastly flame,  
As if she were athirst for sin. Were I  
A Hebrew prophet, I should say that she,  
Having committed some dire wickedness,  
Was doom-struck to rush deeper into guilt,  
Till all her soul were blackened. Azim stays  
Now with her in her chamber ; though I think  
That Azim, daring not to thwart her wish,  
Yet loves her not as once. Ahab is hence,  
Pressing the Syrians hard. She treads all law  
That checks her passion, be it God's or man's,  
Into the dust. — But, peace ! here is the grove.

## SCENE V.

JEZEBEL'S *chamber. Daybreak.*JEZEBEL *and* AZIM.*Jezebel.*

Azim, farewell ; the hills are touched with light :  
We have been Baal and Ashtoreth to-night.



## ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The roof of NABOTH'S house.*

NABOTH *alone.*

*Naboth.*

THE crimson helmet upon Carmel's\* head  
Fades to a plume of gray ; the solemn stars  
Beam on the purple night. How fresh the air  
Feels on my temples ! Placid lies the land,  
Like a babe slumbering in its father's arms.  
Is not God here ? Our father Jacob slept,  
And in his dream the bright ones of the Lord,  
On starry steps descending musical,  
Blessed him with vision of their faces pure.  
I see no angels, yet upon these hills,  
Where cradled Israel sleeps, the child of God,

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\* The word "Carmel" means crimson.

Are they not watching? Did celestial robes,  
Then when the crags beamed silver in the moon,  
Flash on mine eyes? I know not; this I know,  
The Lord's my shepherd; God is as the dew  
To reverent men. Can angels softer tread  
Than the sweet dews, or with more gentle touch  
Than moonlight bathe the forehead when it aches?  
Father, I ask no heavenlier messengers  
To tell me of thy presence. Oh, my heart,  
That often, like a little brook in drought,  
Faintest and growest weary, doubt no more.  
Exult in God. He bindeth up our wounds.  
He goeth out to battle in our van.  
Proud Syria veils her face to Israel.  
Rejoice, my heart, and magnify the Lord.  
Jehovah is my tower; my faith stands strong  
As Carmel yonder, — [ELIJAH *appears*.

*Elijah.*

Aye, when on the hill  
Fall the fine footsteps of the stars, and soft

Come the flock's tinklings from the grassy clefts :  
But, Naboth, when the cloud in murky pall  
Hides Sinai forty days from human eye,  
And Moses comes not, and the people stand  
Haggard and wondering in the wilderness,  
Where then thy faith?

*Naboth.*

My lord Elijah, hail !

What is thy servant that thou deignest thus  
To visit him? I pray thee, let me bring  
Water to wash thy feet, and let me set  
Before thee bread that thou may'st eat, and then  
Lie on my couch and rest ; for travel-stained  
Thou art ; and wet thy hair with drops of night.  
Thy face is pale, and very thin, and sharp,  
And a strange burning which I cannot rede  
Is in thine eyes.

*Elijah.*

Kind Naboth, gentle friend,  
I eat not, rest not. Listen. Far away,

As evening threw the shadows of the rocks  
O'er leagues of glimmering sand, and Moab's hills  
Were saddening into night, the Power, the Breath,  
The Spirit of the Lord, that comes and goes,  
And moves me as the wind the shaken reed,  
Was on me, drave me forth, and brought me here.  
But now it hath departed, and I speak  
With thee as friend with friend, not otherwise.  
For, Naboth, 'tis a Presence wonderful  
Beyond all searching ; when it lists it comes,  
And when it lists it goes ; and very oft  
The moment of its going is just that  
When I would most entreat its tarrying.  
My wish, my will, it heedeth not at all.  
The terrible, strange fire that throbbed and burned  
Within my bosom passeth and is gone,  
And I, who was inspired, am trembling clay.  
But it may be that though Jehovah now  
Sends thee no message by my lip, yet I,  
A simple man, but much experienced, tried



With many sorrows, and who love thee well,  
And know thee, 'mong the faithless, faithful found,  
Will tell thee what may profit thee ; because  
The time is black, and evil lurketh close  
To snare the righteous.

*Naboth.*

Let my lord forgive  
His servant if, with stammering, childish tongue,  
He answereth again. But is the time  
Indeed so black? Did not the fire of God  
Burn on the mount? Doth not this people know,  
Yea, and the heathen too, that Jah is God?  
Did not Benhadad, boastful of the might  
Of Syria's horsemen and his vassal kings,  
One score and twelve, besiege Samaria?  
And was his host not scattered? And again,  
Came he not up by Aphek and the east  
Of Jordan, an unnumbered multitude?  
Beneath the rolling of their chariot-wheels  
Low thunder shook the vales ; their crested helms

Joined hill to hill with links of lightning-flash.  
They thought, forsooth, that only in the hills  
Jehovah fought for Israel, and that we  
Would in the plains be vanquished. Did not then  
The God of Abraham smite them, hip and thigh,  
Making them as the dust on threshing-floor?  
Are these black times or bright? The king himself  
Respects the law of Moses, and the rights  
Of Israel's free-born sons. Give ear, my lord.  
But five days back, I walked i' th' cool o' th' morn  
Within my vineyard. It adjoins the king's.  
Ahab was there. He knows me well, for oft,  
In eddying battle by his chariot-wheel  
Have I close ridden, and perchance my shield  
Hath caught a Syrian javelin going swift  
To pierce his heart. With courteous mien, and hand  
Waved graceful thus, he called me. But his eye  
Had not the clear, straightforward, joyful flash  
It shows on battle mornings in the field.

Would I, he asked, be willing to give up  
My fathers' vineyard? Either he would pay  
Its worth in money, or would give, elsewhere,  
Another better vineyard. In the strength  
Of God and of the law, I said him nay.  
He started, much surprised, and looked at me.  
A cloud passed o'er his visage ; but no word  
Fell from his lip. He shrank away, abashed.  
Are these black times, Elijah?

*Elijah.*

Naboth, friend,  
Brave, loyal, simple-minded, now my heart  
Grows sadder than before, and bodeful thoughts  
Roll darkly o'er my mind. 'Tis perilous  
For private men to dare the wrath of kings.  
Some say their touch can cure ; their look can kill  
With surer efficacy. Little dreamed  
Uriah, brave and gentle, when he fell,  
That the death-blow was signalled by the hand

Of loved and honored David.

*Naboth.*

What, my lord,

Is this thing that thou sayest? Doth the law  
Not straitly charge the men of Israel  
To keep their heritage and sell it not?  
Is not the law God's voice, and can it be  
That he who keeps the law, in keeping it,  
Brings evil on himself?

*Elijah.*

Ah, who can say,

"I know the purposes, the ways of God"?  
In Syria, in the land of Israel,  
In Judah's cities and by all the way  
Of Moab and of Edom till thou come  
To Egypt, men who see me turn and say,  
"There goes Elijah, he who speaks with God,  
He who can bid the rain be garnered up  
Behind the steely windows of the sky,  
Or pour in floods, he who from scabbard draws

Jah's sword, the lightning, he to whom God's will  
Is spread out in its clearness, broad and bright,  
Like fig-leaf in the sun : " 'tis thus they prate.  
Alas ! not one of all the chattering crowd  
But speaks of God more glibly than Elijah.  
Dear Naboth, let me speak a while with thee,  
And mark thou patiently while I rehearse  
Some of God's dealings with my soul, and how  
He lifted me so high that on my gaze  
Brake the great sea of human ignorance ;  
And I learned lessons which are hard to learn,  
Wonder and silence and implicit trust.

Oh, the old days and Gilead's mountain-land !  
The long bold ridge of hill, the wooded bays  
Cliff-sheltered from the blast, the girlish brooks  
That leap from crag to crag, and whirl and dance,  
With clapping of white hands and ringing laugh,  
Along the rich-grassed pasture ! Myriad flocks,  
Dappling the hills with softest summer snow,

And herds wide-wandering in the fertile vales.  
The white tent of my mother, beautiful  
Upon its daisied swell, a precipice  
Rising abrupt behind ; before a bend  
Of slender stream, that brought a little stripe  
Of blue sky from above, a little curve,  
And yet enough to show the arm of God,  
Our fathers' God, drawn round us tenderly.  
The psalm that rolled afar among the hills  
From answering companies when all the west  
Was barred with purple, edged with burnished gold,  
Where angels stood, prolonging the last notes  
Of our eve song, and calling forth the stars  
To tell God's glory to the listening night !

In Gilead dwelt a people serving God,  
Him and him only, keeping Israel's law  
And honoring the king. But travellers brought  
Sad news and strange. Ahab, the Lord's anointed,  
Had ta'en to wife a heathen, Jezebel,

Zealous for Sidon's idols. Night by night  
The groves, lit up with many-colored lamps,  
Thrilling with music's soft, lascivious tones,  
Saw Israel's daughters weave the wanton dance  
With priests of Ashtoreth, while circling glooms  
Fitted a worship which was blasphemy  
Conjoined with lewdness. Suddenly at last  
Our vales were filled with wailings, and we saw,  
Way-worn and faint, their garments red with blood,  
The prophets of the Lord, the remnant saved  
From Jezebel's fierce cruelty. My soul  
Was stirred and changed within me. What! could I,  
While thus my land was smit with pangs of death,  
Follow the flock in peace among the hills?  
Gather them in the noontide 'neath the shade  
Of some tall rock, and watch the slender kids  
Look for their little shepherdess and bleat  
To wake her from her sleep amid the flowers?  
Laugh in the light of dawn and lay me down  
To rest at even? feel the delicate joy

Of golden afternoons by mountain wells?  
Grow mirthful at the step, upon the sward,  
Of comely woman, dream of bridal hours,  
And little maidens at my knee, and boys  
To breast with me the cliffs, and tend the flocks  
When I grow old? —

Ah me! And then it came.

With shuddering and with rapture, woe that wept,  
And joy that pierced and burned, I felt the Breath  
Of God upon me. Seemed a crown was pressed  
Down on my brow, a crown with glory touched,  
Yet stinging as with points of twisted thorn.  
I started up; I spake no parting word  
To father, mother, sister; left the flock  
To wander in the dusk. The starry host  
Were rushing forth into the night; the roar  
Of wakening lions crashed among the hills.  
All night I went. At midnight rose the moon,  
And flung the mountain-wall of Gilead  
In massive black along the silvered plain.



Then Jordan gleamed out like a sword across  
My path. I cleft the tall reeds of the bank  
With eager arms. A lion, as I went,  
Glared fierce, in act to spring : I turned mine eye,  
And back it shrank. I dashed into the stream.  
The cold waves felt the fire of God, and from  
My mantle stroke the startled river fled.  
Day beamed out calm, like God's approving brow.  
The people stared at me, but scarce I marked.  
Still on I went, nor stopped for food or drink,  
Until I met the king. 'Twas in the way  
Hard by the city wall, where first the hill  
That bears Samaria rises from the plain  
And fronts the east. Far as the eye could reach,  
The flowers of virgin summer blushed and bloomed.  
The air breathed fragrance, and the little hills  
Shouted in scarlet gladness, all one blaze.  
The chaliced lilies, white and azure, showed  
The eyes of tender dew, not yet dried up,  
With which they greet the morn ; the wedded vines

Were proud with infant clusters. White clouds sailed  
To gentle wafture of the western wind  
Along the glistening deeps of rainy blue.  
Blank satisfaction smiled on Ahab's face,  
And haughty and serene beside him sat,  
Within his chariot, crowned with gold and pearls,  
Sidonian Jezebel. A chosen troop  
Of Tyrian horsemen pranced before ; behind  
Rang the sweet air with music, thrilling clear  
From trump and flute. Upon a crag I stood,  
And fixed mine eye on Ahab ; when he saw,  
He started, quailed, and could not choose but look.  
I lifted up my voice and said, " O king,  
Sure as the Lord God liveth, before whom  
I stand, from this day forth no dew shall wet  
The grass at dawn, no rain shall fall, except  
According to my word."

There was a change  
That moment in the sky and on the earth.  
The sun drank up the clouds like cups of wine,

And glared, red-eyed, alone. The dewy drops  
On lily and on vine flashed off in films  
Of thin white vapor, rushing to the sky.  
The wind moaned low and died. The air grew hot  
And touched the brow like fire. On Ahab's face  
Came whiteness as of utter fear. He sat  
In quivering terror, dumb. But Jezebel  
Half started from her place ; upon the king  
Darted one scornful look ; and then, on me  
Flashing a glance that struck like javelin  
Between my eyes, " Captain," she cried, " thy life  
For his. How canst thou let the king and me  
Be flouted by this insolent ruffian, one,  
As I suppose, who has escaped the doom  
Prepared most justly for the traitorous knaves  
Who call themselves Jah's prophets ! Seize him ; quick ;  
Hurl him down headlong from the city wall  
Upon the knife-edged stones." I heard no more,  
No more I saw ; for over jutting ledge  
And olive-tufted knoll, I know not how,

I was borne gently down and far away.

Then the great drought prevailed through all the land.  
Upon the fields, instead of bladed grass,  
Lay a white scurf as on a leper's face.  
The drought pierced to the core of the gray hills  
And drank their secret wells. In the sere woods  
The buds half opened in the hope of spring,  
Then shrivelled like the hands of dying babes,  
And made no summer. 'Mid the branches bare  
The voice of birds went silent, and the beasts,  
With black tongues hanging from their mouths, and eyes  
Sunk in their sockets, gazed into the pools  
But found no water. Mountain villages  
Grew silent on the hill and stood as tombs.  
Oh, it was weariness unspeakable  
To see nor fresh green leaf, nor yellow grain,  
Nor purple grape, nor blue corn-flower, nor spark  
Of scarlet poppy, nor white, sailing cloud.  
No color on the world! The woven robe

Of air and moisture laid upon the earth,  
To make her beautiful and draw the love  
Of us her children, had been lifted off  
In God's fierce anger. The old mother face  
Had lost its tenderness of smiles and tears.  
And ever in the distance, day and night, —  
I dwelt then at Zarepta, in the west, —  
Moaned the great sea, unhelping, salt and sad.  
Yes, it was heavy on man's soul, and yet,  
Naboth, — I will not hide it from my friend, —  
Low-whispering in the chambers of my heart  
Lurked still this thought: "It is as *I* did say,"  
And pride found food even in that agony.

Why should I, point by point, rehearse to thee  
What thou rememberest well, the glory wrought  
Upon Mount Carmel: the bared sword of God,  
The mighty acclamation of the throng?  
But know thou this, that, as I stood alone  
Against Baal's hundreds, armed with might Divine,

Through the deep chambers of my heart there rang  
The tones of ancient prophecy, which said  
That to his folk Jehovah would raise up  
A prophet like to Moses, whom they all  
Would follow and obey. Pride's whisper then,  
Faint as the serpent's rustle among stones,  
Glided into my heart that I was he ;  
That Ephraim, melting at my voice, would give  
The hand to Judah, and they both would go,  
With weeping loud for that great weight of joy,  
Up to God's house in company, and then  
That all earth's nations would bow down the knee  
To David's seed on Zion hill enthroned.  
Thou dost remember well how, at the last,  
The heavens grew black with clouds, the rising wind  
Sang from the sea, the vivid lightnings played,  
And, with a thunder-crack that shook the hill,  
Sprang to the earth the cataracts of rain.

O Naboth, how my spirit burned in me !

Since that dread hour when first, on Gilead's hills,  
The Breath of God fell on me, never yet  
Had joy and exultation thrilled my breast  
With such a flood of rapture. Down I rushed,  
Called to the king to mount his chariot  
And urge his horses, lest the trampling floods  
Should bar his way. Since earliest glimpse of dawn  
I had not tasted food, and sore my toil  
In slaying those false prophets. Now the night  
Had fallen. But the terrible joy that rang  
Within my swelling bosom gave me strength,  
And by the chariot of the king I ran,  
Up the long hills, across the vales, and through  
The rising torrents, 'mid the streaming rain.  
I thought, "The king will gladly take me in  
And set me on his right hand, so that I  
May execute the judgments of the Lord,  
And be a greater Moses in the land."  
So ran I till we came to Jezreel,  
And Ahab reined up at his palace door.

There in the porch stood Jezebel. The lamps  
Streamed on her tiar of emeralds and gold.  
Her slender form was draped in snowy white  
With delicate lines of saffron. I could see  
That when her smile fell into Ahab's eyes  
His soul died in him, — all the king died down, —  
Leaving the weak voluptuary. She,  
With sweetest accents and a twinkling eye :  
“ My lord is weary, and the time has come  
For balmy sleep ; the prophet too hath need  
Of rest, for he hath had a heavy day.”  
The face of Ahab radiated. He strode  
Elate into the palace, thinking, sure,  
That I came after ; and I did assay  
To follow : but when he had passed, she turned ;  
With dextrous, silent motion held the door  
Half shut ; and met me with a sudden change.  
Her face was white with wrath. Like coals of fire  
Flashed her fierce eyes, contracted serpent-like,  
And through clenched teeth her words came hissing, hot :



“Hence, miscreant, murderer, hence ; thy hands are red ;  
Thy wolfish face, thy mantle, and thy beard  
Are dripping with the blood of better men  
Than thou. Thou thought’st to hurl me from my seat,  
But I shall teach thee, fool, to dread the wrath  
Of Jezebel. Crouch in some rayless hole,  
Fit for a savage beast, till dawn, and then  
Expect my messenger ; hence, miscreant, hence !”  
She closed the door and left me with the night.  
I stood astonished, dumb ; to my mouth’s roof  
Clung my parched tongue. I looked that the white flame  
Of God’s great sword would cleave the clouds again  
And smite the lewd enchantress. All was still,  
Save that the wind moaned, and the rain fell fast.  
Gone from my bosom was the Breath of God  
That bore me up through that tremendous day.  
Down on the sodden ground I grovelled prone,  
And trembled like an infant in the cold.

Thus passed an hour ; but then my heart revived,

And I bethought me of the clangorous shout  
Raised by the people when Jehovah showed  
His might on Carmel. "At the dawn," I said,  
"Israel will rise with five-score thousand spears,  
And Jezebel will bow her haughty head  
Before God's prophet, executing wrath."  
That moment flapped an owl above my head  
And hooted. Scarce I marked, but cast my eyes  
Along the east, and searched the heavens for morn.  
At the first glimpse of light, I went and stood  
Upon the road that leads to Jezreel  
From Carmel. Brightly came the day. The rain  
Had ceased ; the sky, deep, palpitating, soft,  
Beamed like a blue eye that had shed its tears.  
About the doors began to be a hum  
Of morning sounds, — clear voices and light laughs.  
I stood and watched ; for surely, thought I, they  
Will call to mind God's work upon the hill,  
And look around for him who, yesterday,  
Called down celestial lightning. But it seemed

As if the whole had glided far away  
Into forgetfulness, like twilight dream.  
I could refrain no longer, but went on  
From group to group, and cried aloud that all  
Who served the God that spake by fire should haste  
To fell the groves of Ashtoreth, and slay  
Her prophets, making thus the work complete.  
They listened reverently, bowed low, and then,  
One after one, began to make excuse.  
“The rain has come ; thanks be to God for rain !  
But yet, good lord Elijah, wherefore serves  
The rain unless we prop the drooping vines,  
And lead the flocks to pasture, and put in  
The tender herb to strike in the moist ground?  
We will complete the work of God, of course ;  
But let us first repair the damage done  
By the long drought a little. Only wait.”  
So said they all ; save one, a swarthy man,  
With restless eyes, that sparkled snakishly,  
No child of Israel he, but hither brought

By Jezebel from Sidon in her train.

Close to my ear he slid and whispered low,

“Is your Jah yet athirst? That goodly heap

Of corpses, more than two and twenty score,

Yielded it not enough of blood to serve

For two days’ drinking? Must again, to-day,

Fresh victims die?” I lifted up my hand

To smite the bold blasphemer on the mouth.

But he was lithe and nimble, shunned the blow,

And ran into the city. Then a band,

A little band, scarce fifty men in all,

Drew nigh from Carmel. Naboth, thou wast there,

And thy brave sons, the stripling Jonah, too,

And some few more. And these alone remained

From the unnumbered host of yesterday.

My heart sank utterly. What cared those men

Whether Jehovah was their God or not?

If Baal had sent them rain, Baal had they served.

O Naboth, this is why my heart is sad,

And why I say the times are black ; because

The heart of Israel has forsaken truth  
And rooted into heathen godlessness.  
Upon thy face were tears. But little time  
Was left for solace. From the city gate,  
A horseman, riding swift, approached and reined  
His horse before me. "Unto thee," he said,  
"I come. Queen Jezebel hath sent by me  
Her message. May the everlasting gods,  
Her fathers' and her own, whose dwelling-place  
Is the great sea and the sun's car of flame,  
Do unto her the same, or more, if, ere  
The dawn again shall redden on these hills,  
Thou art not smitten dead." He turned his horse,  
And rode back swiftly, as he came. Save thine,  
Each face grew pale. Thou only liftedst up  
Thy sword, and, standing by my side, didst call,  
With clear, unfaltering voice, upon the men  
Of Israel to stand firm, and trust the might  
Of God and of his prophet. Even then  
Loud rang the trumpet from the town; we heard

The sound of trampling horses. Suddenly  
A panic terror shook the little band.  
They fled confusedly, and with brief farewell  
We parted, you and I. The widow's son  
Still held to me. Forth issuing from the town,  
The horsemen, thinking, doubtless, I had fled  
Along the way to Carmel, urged their steeds  
Towards the west. We girded up our loins,  
The youth and I, and ran until we came  
To Judah's land ; and there he left me too.  
I bade him go ; and yet a searching pang  
Struck to my heart, for was he not the last  
Of all the mighty throng of yesterday?

I could not tarry among living men,  
So bitterly I yearned to pour my heart  
Before my God alone. Once more I ran ;  
By devious paths, up lonely hills, through glens  
Afar from human footstep ; on, still on.  
The exulting sun strode grandly to the west,

And on the radiant heavens lit fantasies  
Of streaming splendor wildly bright, yet all  
In tenderest modulation harmonized,  
Of white and blue and scarlet, curtaining  
God's azure tent. The pulsing glory fell  
Along the world from ruddy hill to hill ;  
And overhead, in mantling, glittering light, —  
Millions of waving wings, all crimson flame, —  
A mightier glory answered it again.  
Methought that there was music in the heavens.  
And in that rapture of the earth and sky  
Which seemed to mock my bitter agony,  
I fled in speechless anguish.

On, still on,  
Till every step and voice of humankind  
Or lowing cattle, or of bleating sheep,  
Was far behind, and gaunt the desert stretched  
Before me. Then upon the naked sand  
I sank as dead. My stiffening limbs I felt  
Stone-heavy on the dust. And yet mine eyes

Closed not in sleep, but burned like balls of fire,  
And all my soul was racked with misery.  
No heaven-sent raven brought me flesh or bread,  
No friendly woman led me to her house.  
The night had fallen, and I was desolate ;  
Companioned by the desert crags, that showed  
Gray spectral faces in the waning moon.  
The screech-owl hooted, and the beasts of night  
Prowled round with hungry glances ; from their caves  
The satyrs laughed and gibbered. Naboth, then  
A fearful thought clutched coldly at my heart.  
It seemed that, in those harsh, discordant sounds,  
I heard the shriekings of the priests of Baal,  
Whom I but yesterday had slain. Ah, friend,  
Filled with God's Breath, the prophet may become  
Like to the angel armed that holds the sword  
Of death, and smites the little babe, nor hears  
The mother's wailings shrill ; but when the Lord  
Calls back his breath, and leaves his servant weak,  
Far weaker than before, ah, woe is me !



Then human blood hangs heavy on the hands  
Of mortal men. And I was gentle once ;  
For shepherds commonly are tender men,  
And delicately raise the orphan lambs  
Left by the mothers of the flock, and lay  
Them softly on the bosom. Praised be God,  
I did not charge him foolishly, or ask  
Why he had called me from the folding hills  
And morning softness of my Gilead home.  
It was not I elected to become  
The instrument of his great power. — But no ! —  
Even then I did not question what the word  
Of Jah had rendered plain. This thing I did ; —  
With weeping loud and rending of the hair,  
I prayed that God would let me die, for now  
'Twas plain that I was not the chosen one,  
Like unto Moses, whom the Lord would bring  
To give his people peace, and reunite  
Israel and Judah ; no, 'twas very clear  
That I no better than my fathers was,

As in my foolish vanity I deemed.  
Therefore I prayed, with wringing of my hands  
And rending of my hair, that I might die ;  
And still I prayed, and still the screech-owl's yells,  
And the wolf's snarl, the satyr's horrid laugh,  
Mingled with my loud plaining in the night.  
At last I heard as in a dream when men  
Are weary unto death, and all those sounds  
Sank far away into the hollow dark ;  
And then I knew not, suffered not, for sleep,  
Deep sleep, fell on me, sleep without a dream.

A grave, sweet melody that floated faint,  
Farther and farther going ; tremblings soft  
Of light about mine eyes ; a gentle touch,  
That thrilled through all my frame : and I awoke.  
In that same moment, I beheld three forms —  
Three woman forms, but fairer, clothed in white,  
With golden harps, and also, as I think,  
With crowns, but that might be their golden hair —

Glide silent up a moss-green hill, where lay  
A white cloud of the dawn ; they entered in ;  
A flush of rose-light mantled through its snow,  
And from that footstool green it floated up,  
Like morning prayer to heaven.

The sky was still.

Not any pomp of clouds ; a pale white dawn ;  
Gray dews and films of vapor pearly-blue.  
Then I was ware of some one near to me ;  
And as the light all gathers from the sky  
Into the first pure star that pulses keen,  
Like a clear eye above the evening hill,  
So gathered all my soul into my gaze  
On him ; yes, Naboth, for it was a man,  
As it might be a shepherd of the hills,  
Or carpenter, or toil-worn fisherman,  
A homely man ; and yet an angel ; nay,  
The Angel of the Covenant himself,  
The Lord Jehovah. Ask not how I knew ;  
No prophet knoweth how he knoweth God,

Or how he knows that God's Breath moveth him.  
I know not how I live, yet cannot doubt  
That here I am. The light that showeth God  
Burns up both doubt and proof, as the full sun  
Quencheth both moon and stars in blaze of day.  
Silent and wondering I gazed, and low  
Within my bosom whispered pride : " Now list,  
This Man will mysteries unfold, and tell,  
In words like those which angels hear in heaven  
With bended brows while all the skies are mute,  
What mean the dreadful dealings of these days,  
And justify the ways of God to me  
His prophet." This he said, " Arise and eat." -  
Upon a smooth rock at my side I saw  
A baken cake, a little water cruse.  
I ate, I drank. He spake no other word :  
But, as I ate, soft stealing through my frame,  
An infinite of solacement and rest  
Possessed my soul ; my temples ceased to throb ;  
The fever left my brow and hand ; new life,

In finest tinglings, thrilled through all my frame.  
Oft have I seen in Gilead's vales a flock  
Careering with loud cries and bounding wild  
O'er crag and into torrent, frantic made  
By some fierce terror of the wood ; and then,  
When they beheld their shepherd, heard his voice,  
They gathered silently about his feet,  
And lay down placid there and went to sleep.  
So all my raging, wandering thoughts came home  
To this Man's feet, his presence folding them  
In perfect safety and in sweet content.  
I knew all now, all I behoved to know.  
God could match Jezebel ; the world would stand  
On sure foundations, and the lustrous heavens  
Glow in calm splendor, though Elijah rent  
His hair and fretted like an angry child.  
All I had really wanted I had got,  
A draught of water and a piece of bread.

The Breath of God descended yet again

And led me on along the desert waste  
For many days, till Horeb's forehead gaunt,  
With gray peaks diademed and tressed with cloud,  
Sprang from the hot sand into middle air.  
There, in a caverned gorge that pierced the hill,  
Near to the summit, was I placed, to wait  
The hour of revelation : soon it came.

From that high cleft methought that I beheld  
The world and all its glory at my feet.  
Men built them palaces of joy and hope,  
Fair as the exhalations of the dawn.  
Slim pinnacles, aerially poised,  
Brightened the sunlight with their liquid gems.  
The fronts, the arches, gables, gleamed and glowed  
With delicatest wreaths of carven stone  
Arranged in subtle-sweet imagining,  
Loveliest forms and colors, lily-blooms  
And tendrilled vines, and neck of dove and limb  
Of mountain fawn, and princely human shapes.

The morning light moved slowly, lovingly,  
Amid that beauty, which it kissed to blush  
Of melting iridescence ; then it stole  
Through trellised windows into pictured halls,  
Pure ivory corridors and vistas long,  
Where its white beam fell, shattering gloriously,  
On silver tissue, cloth of gold, and silk  
Of varying sheen, and sparkling jewellery,  
Keen diamond, ruby warm, and emerald.  
With costliest odors swooned the enchanted air.  
But in the secret chambers shrines were lit  
To Belial ; and the pictures on the wall  
Were cunning ministries to demon lusts,  
The foes of God and man ; and blasphemy  
Was wafted in the music as it stole  
From room to room ; and men went languidly,  
All virtue lost, all manhood's strength relaxed,  
In dissolute pallor and voluptuous sin.

Then as I looked, a sudden, rushing wind,

A mighty wind, that rent the affrighted air,  
Smote all those sun-gilt palaces, and swept  
Their pageantry away like shrivelling films  
Of painted gossamer at early morn.

But when the wind had passed, men rôse and reared  
A stabler masonry. Foundation-stones  
Of adamant, with iron clamped, were set  
Deep in the rocky framework of the world.  
The strength of hills — great fronts of precipice,  
Taking the light in broad resplendent gleams —  
Cornice of crag, and splintered pinnacles  
Of perdurable granite. Beauty smiled  
Upon the face of strength ; and men, elate,  
Wrote everlasting on their battlements.  
And were they better, were they happier?  
Woe never left their eyes, and in their hearts  
Was rooted scorn for God, and bitter-cold  
And cruel selfishness to brother men.  
For Belial's melting strains, the grating sound



Of Moloch's torture-engines. Vanity  
Shrank down, but pride stood up, the deadlier sin.  
And thus I knew *God was not in the wind.*

Then, like a deep thunder heard afar, a groan  
Burst from the bosom of the mournful earth,  
And shook her, as in spasm of mortal shame,  
That quivered to her utmost mountain-tops.  
With one tremendous crash the city fell.  
The opening earth closed quick on tottering towers  
And living men, then yawned and closed again.  
Long rents and ghastly chasms broke wide, and showed  
The couch of fire beneath, where wrinkling coiled  
The dragon Earthquake. Shrieks of pain arose,  
Mad cries of fright and yells of agony.  
But not one heavenly visitant was there :  
No soft-voiced pity, no sweet human love,  
No selfless fortitude or faithfulness,  
No pure religion, bowing low the head,  
To take the stroke in meek humility :

Men fought for lucre in the earthquake's jaws,  
And Murder stalked abroad with reeking knife,  
And through the dusk two spectral phantoms loomed,  
In grisly conflict hideously opposed,  
Fool Superstition, maniac Blasphemy.  
*God was not in the earthquake.*

Then I saw

On every mountain peak a tongue of flame,  
And from the mass of ruins, vibrating  
With th' earthquake's throes, fierce conflagration broke.  
Slow burned the quenchless flame,—down, down,—until  
It reached the bones of men, and sent its sting  
Into the heart. They gnawed their tongues for pain,  
But, while they gnawed them, cursed their God aloud,  
And turned with frantic passion to invent  
New forms of sin, more exquisitely bad  
In poisonous death to all humanity,  
And subtler blasphemy that yearned intense  
To spit its venom in God's face and die.

“Woe’s me,” I wept; “*He is not in the fire.*”

Long, long I gazed in sad astonishment  
Upon the broad field of the mournful world;  
At last, I knew not wherefore, did mine eye  
Fix upon One that moved among the crowds  
In homely raiment clad; a few poor men  
Followed him, half-ashamed; then more intense  
Became my gaze, for now I knew ’twas he  
Who gave me of the water and the bread.  
His words were very simple. “Love your God,  
And love your brother; speak the truth; admit  
No compromise with evil. Choose the right,  
With poverty, with death, with social shame.  
Ye cannot be, at once, alive and dead.  
Possess in quietness the gifts of God,  
The corn, the purple grape. Have faith in him,  
And take his light as lily of the field.  
Seek ye no joy that is your own alone,  
Or strikes a pang to any sentient thing.

Be thine the victor-thrill when evil sinks  
Transfixed by good, to rise transformed. Believe  
In me, the way, the truth, the life ; in me,  
The power, the light, the love ; in present God,  
Revealed as Kindness. I am Christ, the King  
Of Israel and of man." I heard amazed ;  
Yet, dimly syllabled within my heart,  
The prayer arose that he indeed might reign  
Upon Mount Zion : he, so winning-wise,  
So gently just ; strong, too, I thought, to quell  
His people's foes. Great David's battle-arm,  
With Solomon's calm brow and sovereign eye,  
Would meet in him ; the heathen he would smite  
Until they owned his sway, and all the earth  
Would ring with hymns of praise to Israel's God.

So mused I, lying there in vivid trance,  
And, as I mused, forgot, the while, to look  
Upon the vision.

Suddenly the air

Was rent with clamors and upbraidings loud.  
"Thou Israel's King ! Thou fellow ! Where thy crown,  
Thy sceptre ? Where thy sword of fire to burn  
The wicked, and to pierce the hearts of all  
Our enemies and thine ?" They gnashed their teeth  
In hissing fury ; rushed on him with yells  
Of frantic anger, scourged him, bound a crown  
Of thorns about his brow, then thrust him forth  
And nailed him to a tree ; and I beheld  
His white face in the twilight, moist with dew  
Of lingering agony ; but through the pain  
Love glowed ineffable, and overcame.  
Around the cross, with cries of scorn and hate,  
Weltered a rancorous crowd, that mocked and laughed.  
His lip moved faintly, and these accents came :  
"Father, forgive ; they know not what they do."  
A still small voice, and spoken low in pain ;  
A human voice, and yet as full of God  
As the white heaven where stands the Eternal Throne.  
Yes, *God was in the voice.*

He bowed his head,  
And hung, a lifeless form, upon the tree.  
And round that form, methought that I beheld,  
In adamantine pride and scornful hate,  
The principalities and powers of earth,  
The mighty idols that have blinded men,  
Tier above tier, in rangéd hierarchies,  
Nations majestic in their sceptred pride,  
Armies whose trumpets spoke the law o' th' world.  
All scowled defiance on that pallid form.  
It seemed the frailest thing, as there it hung,  
Between the stars of God and graves of men,  
The frailest thing in all this universe.—  
Then in the vision, many, many years,  
By centuries, by thousands, rolled away ;  
And toning, toning on, in spheric chime,  
That still small voice made melody divine ;  
And one by one those idols from their thrônes  
Fell, crumbling into dust. And one by one  
Those nations failed like sere leaves of the wood ;

Those armies slumbered in a stony sleep.  
The cycles of the world were long, the ear  
Of man was heavy, but the still small voice  
Went sounding, sounding on immortally.  
A thousand years were short for men to catch  
One of its tones ; they learned the simplest last.  
And often they that loudliest named the name  
Of him that hung upon the tree, did most  
To drown that voice ; and many woe-worn men,  
And tender, tremulous women, died in fire,  
Half-conscious that a smile fell through the smoke  
Upon them from the Cross, and that the words  
Which the priests gnashed at, howling “blasphemy”  
And “infidelity,” were truer far  
To the deep melody of that small voice  
Than chants that rolled and rang in choral peal  
Through proud cathedrals. Ah, methought that Form  
Writhed on the cross as host met host in clash  
Of internecine fury, echoing each  
The name of Christ ; and Christian kings knelt down

To wring the heart's blood to the latest drop  
From anguish-smitten nations, and then turned  
White eyes of grateful homage on that Form.  
Slowly, so slowly ! in the human heart  
Died the base worship of brute iron strength,  
But yet it died at last, to live no more.  
First war was waged for justice, then for peace ;  
And one, the youngest, freest of the nations,  
Having made war on war with courage high  
And costliest sacrifice of wealth and blood,  
Resolute that the plains of her new world  
Should not be drenched in perpetuity  
By blood of striving peoples, but should be  
A realm fraternal, federal, held the sword  
With which she conquered for mankind, to heaven,  
Untarnished by one drop of blood outpoured  
After the conflict. Slowly came the dawn,  
With many flaws of storm and blots of night,  
But yet the radiance grew, the darkness failed ;



And, gradual, all the voices upon earth  
Were modulated to the still small voice ;  
And all the human faces became touched  
With love-light beaming from the Crucified.  
He had drawn mankind upward unto him,  
And men, renewed, became indeed as God,  
Not only knowing sin, but hating it, —  
Not only knowing good, but loving it.  
And yet, and yet, the vision was most strange,  
Or past my comprehending ; where, I thought,  
The pearly gates, the diamond citadels,  
The golden gleams on vestments white, the crowns,  
Of Shiloh's realm? The lilies of the field  
No fairer were than erst. The orient pearls,  
That gemmed the world, were but the dew of morn ;  
The blue sky palpitated not more soft  
Than over Gilead in my youth. The change  
Was in the human faces ; they were bright  
With the glow of heaven, and this ambition reigned,

This only in all bosoms, that from earth  
One hymn of praise to God, one anthem pure,  
The universal smile in music voiced,  
Without the discord of a single pang,  
Should rise melodious to the wondering stars.  
For man, divined by Christ, found joy divine  
In mitigating anguish. Nor alone  
For man had misery's moaning given place  
To joy's great music ; he had learned to feel  
The tenderness of righteous sovereignty,  
And over all the creatures exercised  
A rule that gave them amplest happiness  
Within their being's limits. Then men laughed  
To think of those black times when foolishly  
Their fathers deemed that setting armed heel  
On foeman's neck was half so fine a joy  
As to raise up his drooping form and kiss  
His cheek and brow ; that lordship, sceptred rank,  
Or pomp, or pride, could yield so rich a wine  
Of rapture as the blush of opening flowers,

The frosted silver of the lily's cup,  
Or mantling crimson of the mountain rose,  
Or, finer essence still, tear-softened smile  
On happy face, lit up with gratitude  
To those who bless it.

But what more I learned  
Ask me not. Incommunicable thoughts  
Rolled o'er my mind, and questions mystical :  
How joy, the radiant child, should aye be born  
Of woe, the death-struck mother. Yon fire-heart,  
The ever-burning sun, preys on itself  
Perpetually ; and yet its burning gives  
Delight and beauty to the world, its eye  
Of sweet effulgence to the dew, its crown  
Of forest to the mountain, grass for food  
To cattle, corn and wine and palm to man.  
And is it possible that the joy-heart  
Of all the universe of life, which sends  
Its mighty pulse through everything that feels,  
Should be the Christ in pain? Ah, Naboth, now

I know why David, smiting foes of Jah,  
Slaying the Philistine, and pouring out  
Fierce anger upon Rabbah, could not be  
The builder of the temple. Now I know  
The blood I shed on Kishon's stones was far  
Less blest an offering to God than cup  
Of water given to a thirsty child.  
The innocent that suffers, he it is  
Who in the Lord's great battle takes the prize.  
Elect to suffer is elect to save.  
And he will shine more brightly in the ring,  
The starry ring of souls arrayed in white,  
Arrayed in white and bearing golden harps,  
That stand around the Throne for evermore,  
Who, overwhelmed by dominant wrong, is slain  
With shame, with violence, than he who goes  
From life victorious, nor knows death at all,  
Rapt in the chariots of God to heaven.

*Naboth.*

Where is my lord Elijah? It did seem

His eye was lifted, after but a pause,  
To bid me mark the sequel. Now, behold!  
I am alone. And howls the weary wind  
That doth precede the dawn; howls dolefully,  
With voice of lamentation. White mists float  
From all the valleys, covering the hills,  
Like to a linen cloth drawn gently up\*  
Over the face of one that lieth dead.

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SCENE II. *Jezreel. The Place of Public Worship  
and Assembly. The whole congregation; the El-  
ders on seats above the rest; NABOTH in the highest  
seat of all.*

*Chief Elder.*

Our brother Naboth, known unto us well  
For valiant soldiership and many deeds  
Of kindness to the poor, and honored now  
By special mandate of the king to hold

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\* Mr. Tennyson, I think, uses this image somewhere.

The highest place in this our solemn Fast,  
Will take the Book and read to us the Law  
Delivered us by Moses, man of God.

*Naboth.*

Fathers and brethren, in the Book Divine  
The Lord hath written, by his servant's hand : —  
“Thou shalt not sell this land for evermore.  
The land is mine. Ye are my stranger guests,  
My sojourners :” and yet again 'tis writ : —  
“No man shall yield his own inheritance  
To man of other kin ; but every one  
That is of Israel shall keep his land  
Within the circle of his native tribe.”  
Fathers and brethren, shall I, reverently,  
Ask why our God hath given us this strict charge  
To keep our heritage and sell it not?  
Is it that we may lift our brows in pride  
As lords of land? Our God abhorreth pride.  
Is it to close the founts of charity  
And frank good-will, that would oblige a friend

Or neighbor, who might much desire our land?

Jehovah doth detest the churlish soul.

Our words, our deeds, our lands, our life itself

He willeth us to hold, not for ourselves,

But for the common benefit and joy.

This is the cause why none may sell his land : —

Our Lord is gracious and compassionate ;

His justice, from its equal wings outspread

In blessing o'er the land, sheds dews of love ;

And he would have us nestle to our homes

And hold them as our special gift from him ;

So that while, gliding by our pleasant hills,

The quiet waters linger in our vales,

While breaks the scarlet gleam of many flowers,

In dazzling sheen, beneath the sky of spring,

While lilies blow, while olives bear their fruit,

While vine-leaves cling about the cottage porch,

Their voices shall be ever in our ears,

As of a thousand angel witnesses,

In delicate acclaim, reminding us

Of our dear Father's kindness. It may be  
That other lands bear statelier crowns of palm,  
More wealth of yellow corn, and lordlier bloom  
Of flowers resplendent; but could any be  
So sweet to us, so moving to our hearts,  
So musical with tenderest memories,  
As the dear land that we have always known;  
The fig-tree up to which our mothers held  
Our little hands, when we were in their arms?  
The very vine from which, with trembling joy,  
We culled a cluster ere we went, at eve,  
To see the maiden of our earliest love?  
Ah, no! Our Father knoweth that no place  
Can tell so much of him as home — What now?

[*Commotion among the people. Two men press through, making their way with an appearance of great agitation to the raised seats of the Elders. They face NABOTH, and one of them cries aloud.*]

*First son of Belial.*

“What now?” Come down, exalted infamy,



Come down, thou pale hypocrisy, thy guilt  
Already whitens thy false face. Let me,  
Fathers and brethren, from the holy Book  
Read words more meet for Naboth's lying lip  
Than those he read erewhile. 'Tis written thus :  
" He that blasphemeth God's most holy name  
Shall die the death ; the congregation all  
Shall stone him." Naboth, thou art a blasphemer  
Against God and the king ! My friend, good Peleg,  
And I were walking, three days back, at eve  
Beside his house, this Naboth's. Him we saw,  
And heard with perfect clearness, for, ye know,  
The vineyards of the terrace on the hill  
Hang o'er and almost touch his wall. Of course  
He neither heard nor saw us as we sat  
Behind the screening vine-wreaths. We beheld  
Him and a heathen guest, we know not whom,  
In confidential colloquy ; and when  
The evening sank, and all was very still,  
And he believed that no true Israelite

Heard what he said ; he told that heathen man,  
With vaunting words and gestures arrogant,     ,  
That he had bearded and defied the king,  
Even King Ahab, and that, as for him,  
He feared no God whatever, Jah or Baal,  
But made a show of pious exercise  
And spoke in reverent phrases, because thus  
Alone a man could lead a quiet life  
Among the Hebrews, prone beyond all folk  
To tyrannies of slavish superstition.  
And then the heathen grinned, and gave the hand  
To Naboth, and they drank great draughts of wine,  
And cursed the king and God, and laughed aloud.  
I ask thee, Peleg, is not this the truth ?

*Second son of Belial.*

The words which thou hast spoken are the truth.

*The first of the Elders.*

Naboth, what dost thou answer ? Thou may'st speak.

*Naboth.*

What should I answer ? Come around me, sons,

As we have stood together in the fray.  
I can but say that I am innocent  
Of these great sins. The honor hath been mine —  
I thank the Highest for it — with my shield  
To guard my sovereign's head in fight. The men  
Who now accuse me know that this is true.  
Why should I, then, speak treason, or revile  
My lord the king? As for the other charge,  
The deadlier blasphemy, if ye, my friends,  
Elders and brethren of my town, to whom  
Is known my going out and coming in,  
Can deem that the white witness of my brow  
Is not truth's healthful word, but leprosy  
Attesting guilt profane, my lips could shape  
No argument of force to change your thought.  
The Lord Jehovah dealeth wondrously  
With Naboth and his house. But if his smile  
Fell warm upon us many years, 'tis meet  
That when the cloud of this great agony  
Curtains day's sky with black, we trust him still.

In death's dark valley we shall hear his voice,  
And he will lead us unto pastures green,  
Where living waters flow for evermore.  
And standing here between the life and death,  
We give him earnest thanks that never one  
Of Naboth's house hath bent the knee to Baal.  
We thank him, too, for this, that unto me  
It was vouchsafed that I, a free-man born,  
Subject to Israel's God and Israel's law,  
Should vindicate that law against the king,  
And, with the law, the people's liberty,  
Refusing to yield up my heritage.  
Nay, start not, Milchi ; hear me to the end.  
I see it written on thy quailing face  
That well thou knowest what, ere many days,  
All Israel will know, that we are slain,  
By wicked plot, to feed the ravenous spite  
Of Jezebel, and crush a Hebrew man  
Who dared to stand erect before his king  
On earth, appealing to *his* King in heaven.

Oh how, even in this death-black hour, the thought,  
That I have always stood with those who faced  
In truceless opposition Jezebel,  
Comes like a mighty angel sent from God  
To give me comfort. Oh, consoling joy,  
To know that she will never set her foot  
On Naboth's neck until she tread on clay !  
We die free Israelites, but, Gershom, you  
And Milchi live as slave, the basest slaves,  
Who murder at command.

*Milchi.*

I needs must speak,  
Though much averse to even seem to deal  
Harshly with Naboth. But by words like these —  
Cast out in wholesale random accusation  
Of high and low, from Jezebel the queen  
To my poor harmless self — by words, I say,  
Of venomd slander and of loud conceit,  
As if he only were true Israelite,  
And as if seemliness and gratitude

Did not require from men of Jezreel  
Respect for that august and liberal queen,  
To whom the city owes so much, — by these  
He but suggests what I would fain have held  
For quite impossible, that he is not  
- Prepared to meet by counter-evidence  
The charge which we have heard. 'Tis not his place —  
I beg that he will let me say as much —  
To teach chief elder Gershom and myself  
Our duty, and 'tis monstrous even to hint  
That justice hath been tampered with by us.  
But the main point is this. He hath been bid  
To answer to a clearly worded charge  
Of import terrible, but most precise.  
He wanders into sweeping calumnies,  
Such as we cannot and we dare not hear.  
I firmly call him, therefore, to the point.

*Naboth.*

God be our help ! I speak no other word.

*Chief Elder (after a pause).*

This ostentatious silence I regret.

I hoped, with my good brother Milchi here,  
That Naboth, whom we all were wont to love,  
Would state some fact,—but one,—to break the proof  
So circumstantially laid before us  
By two sworn witnesses. They say a man  
Was with him on his roof at eventide  
Three days ago. Can he explicitly  
Declare that no such man was there, and bring  
Either some valid witness, or adduce  
Some well-attested circumstance, to prove  
His declaration true? He shakes his head.  
I grieve most bitterly. But are there two,  
Or, to stretch forms of law for justice' sake,  
Is there even one, in all this crowd, to swear,  
Of his or her own knowledge, that these men,  
Naboth's accusers, at the place and hour  
Which they have specified, were elsewhere?  
I pause for a reply.

Woe worth the day !

There is no answer ! Naboth's guilt is plain.

The law must have its course, and — for I hear

Some of the common people murmuring —

Let there be no delay ; away with him !

[*A commotion in the assembly. A loud voice heard.*

HEMAN, *endeavoring to make his way to the raised seats, speaks.*]

*Heman.*

Help, all true Israelites ; these Elders, false  
To God and to the people and themselves,  
Are murdering the best man in Jezreel :  
Naboth is victim of some cursed plot,  
Some devilish lie —

*Milchi.*

This is insufferable.

Friend Heman, peace ! Your wanderings on the hills  
Have heated your imagination, till you see  
No solid world around you, but a whirl  
Of your wild dreams and fancies.



*Heman.*

Milchi, down

Upon thy face and eat the dust, God's grant  
To thee and other serpents ! Hypocrite,  
Blandest and sweetest, plausiblest and worst,  
In all the land of Israel —

*Chief Elder.*

Officers,

Drive this rude fellow forth ! He well deserves  
Chastisement stern ; but any one may see  
That he is light of head, and we do wish  
To deal in every case with gentleness.

[HEMAN *is hustled from the hall* The officers then  
*seize NABOTH and his sons and hurry them to execu-*  
*tion.*]

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SCENE III. *A hill-side.*

HEMAN *alone.*

*Heman.*

O God of Israel, how it wrung the heart

To see him as the stones came hurtling thick !  
Himself he had forgotten utterly, and faced  
Death with unflinching eye. But when he saw  
His innocent boys about him smitten hard,  
The red blood springing on their white young brows,  
Nature o'ermastered him, he clamored loud,  
And wildly held his arms and face between,  
To meet the stones and shield them, till he fell.  
Shame on the earth that opened not her jaws  
To hurry down his murderers to hell !  
Shame, tenfold shame, upon my countrymen  
That saw him perish ! Israel is lost ;  
Baseness and cowardice and godlessness  
Have eaten out its heart. I can but weep.



ACT V.

SCENE I. *The garden of the Palace at Jezreel.*

AHAB and JEZEBEL

*Ahab.*

YES, that will do. A road can softly bend  
Round yonder swell, and so approach the house:  
The ground, I hear, takes kindly to all sorts  
Of useful herbs, far kindlier than that  
Which thus we rescue, leaving free the space  
Beneath our palace windows for the sweep  
Of one pure curve in undulation fine,  
Tree leading tree, sward brightening into flowers,  
Flowers melting modestly again to green,  
In placid breadth of beauty. Not till now  
Did I dare hope that all the high-toned joy,  
Which the eye, educated to a sense of form

And hue in landscape, woos into the soul,  
Could glad me looking from my palace white  
O'er the sweet hills and plains of Jezreel.

*Jezebel.*

Ay, and to whom does Ahab owe all this?  
Not only that she flung the froward slave,  
Who barred his path, like carrion 'neath his wheel,  
But that in princely Sidon, long ago,  
She showed him what was beauty? Say, lord,  
When Argive kings and chiefs desire to send  
A present unto one they honor most  
Or dearest love, whether a woven robe,  
Of colors blended like the rose and snow  
Of morning's earliest blush, or goodly vase  
Of silver, lipped with gold, and of a form  
Compared with which, in beauty's pricelessness,  
The silver and the gold were nothing worth,  
Where do they seek it?

*Ahab.*

Oh, I know ; but now

This Jezreel will be Sidon ; will it not,  
Mine irresistible? — Hush ! look you there —  
A cold pang thrills me through from head to heel —  
It is Elijah.

*Elijah.*

King of Israel,  
Give ear unto my words. Thus saith the Lord :  
Hast thou done murder, and so speedily  
Taken possession? Doth the innocent blood  
Not speak to Me against thee from the ground?  
I will bring evil on thee and thy house.  
Thy branch shall wither. Him of Ahab's name  
That dieth in the city dogs shall eat,  
And him that falleth in the field the fowls  
Shall tear ; and in the place where Naboth fell  
The dogs shall dip their tongues in Ahab's blood.

*Jezebel.*

Thou haggard, rude, and frenzy-tainted man,  
How dar'st thou thus insult thy lord, the king?

*Elijah.*

I have a message, Jezebel, for thee.

*Jezebel.*

For me? — I do defy thee and thy Jah :  
Begone, or slaves shall whip thee from the place,  
A public scorn.

*Elijah.*

Cease raging, Jezebel.

I see the quivering of thy livid lip  
And thy cowed eye ; the Light that speaks from mine  
Hath quelled thee.

*Jezebel.*

Nay, presume not thou too far ;  
But, — for I see the king is moved, — I will  
Consent to reason with thee. Tell me, then,  
Why, from the first, when I was young and came  
From mine own people and my land to be  
The Queen of Israel, cherishing the wish,  
Dear as an infant growing 'neath my heart,  
That my adopted country should rejoice

And prosper in my reign, thou didst assay  
To do me wrong, to thwart me, to o'erthrow  
The gods I worship?

*Elijah.*

Because, from the first,  
Thou, Queen of Israel, madest it thine aim  
To quench the nation's vital spark, to kill  
That which is Israel's soul, inbreathed from heaven ;  
To change the Hebrew worshipper of One,  
A Spirit, infinite, invisible,  
Into a heathen bowing reckless down  
To many things called gods.

*Jezebel.*

Thou knowest well  
In the beginning we allowed the rite  
Of Israel's God, demanding nothing more  
Than that great Baal and radiant Ashtoreth  
Should be supremely honored.

*Elijah.*

To consent

To this, on part of any Israelite,  
Had been the deadliest treason.

*Jezebel.*

Is it thou,  
Thou only, then, that knowest what is due  
From Israel's children to their land, their law,  
And their Jehovah? Did not Solomon  
Build unto Jah a house and serve him well?  
Was not his prayer for wisdom? Was not he  
The wisest deemed of all the race of men?  
Yet did he not, in ripeness of his years,  
Cast glances round of genial sympathy  
To neighboring monarchs? Did he not permit  
The gods of all the nations to be shrined  
Upon Mount Zion? Did he not relax  
The iron rigor of your Sinai law,  
Embathe his soul in beauty's dewy gleam,  
Enconrâge dance and song, and own the might,  
Ay and the right, above all rules morose,  
Of passion tempesting the human breast?



Hard prophet, hast thou never heard of love,  
That thou shouldst fiercely hate my Ashtoreth,  
And call the joy with which she fills the frame,  
Till the brain reels, and the bliss, piercing sweet,  
Flutters upon the brink of madness, when  
The lit grove wavers in the midnight dance,  
Mere fervor lewd of harlot-priestesses?  
Wise Solomon knew better ; but it seems  
That we are wiser now than David's son.

*Elijah.*

In his last years the throne of Solomon  
Seemed to the general eye to stand secure,  
But Nathan, Gad, and all the prophets knew  
That he had left the Strength of Israel,  
And that his pride, though casting to the sky  
Its branching splendors like a cedar tall,  
Covered a heart of tomb-like hollowness.  
His duty and his glory as a king, —  
To tend his people as the flock of God  
Committed to his keeping, — to protect

The poor man's right, — to fill the reservoirs  
Of justice, and conduct its healing streams  
In many channels throughout all the land, —  
To swell the multitude of happy homes, —  
To garner up the love of grateful hearts, —  
To lend to prudence, truth, and fortitude,  
To temperance, chastity, and uprightness,  
To all the virtues that make nations whole  
And prosperous and glad and peaceable,  
The winning majesty and gracious charm  
Breathed from the face of a beloved king, —  
All this — the finest joy of kingliness —  
He had forgotten ; courting, in its stead,  
A surface-glitter, false and valueless,  
Magnificence not rooted in the soil,  
Fantastic, brought from far, an alien show ;  
Vying in earthly grandeur with the thrones  
Of heathen monarchs, negligent of all  
The jewels set by God in David's crown.  
Therefore the wisest erst of living men

Became a dotard, sated, listless, worn,  
Of clouded eye and rambling utterance,  
In dozing indolence unheedful all  
If God or Baal were worshipped ; lapped in dream  
That lies and truth are much about the same, —  
That souls can feed on poison as on bread, —  
That love, which, glowing in the rudest hut,  
Turns stone and wood and clay to starry gold,  
A heavenly lamp to suit the heavenly flame,  
Is all the same as lust's enchantment foul  
Within the tainted groves of Ashtoreth, —  
That beauty —

*Jezebel.*

What do Hebrews know of beauty?

Thy words are words of puffed-up Ignorance,  
Which, rolling eyeballs blind as stones around,  
Swears that there is no fretted jewel-work  
Of sparkling fire upon the midnight sky,  
No golden rain when trailing clouds at eve  
Pass o'er the sea between you and the sun,

No flower, no emerald grass, no plummy palm,  
Nothing but uniformity of rock,  
Black, changeless, hard, yet not so iron-hard  
As the law frowning from its grisly brow.

*Elijah.*

Error and falsehood are of myriad kinds,  
The Right is one for ever. Upon truth  
Rests worship ; upon law reposes love ;  
And beauty dwells with purity alone :  
The real these ; the shows are million-fold.

*Jezebel.*

Thy rigid uniformity is death.  
Show me two stars upon the crown of night  
That shed the self-same ray ; two virgin flowers,  
Though growing on one stem, alike in all ;  
Two waves like-tinted in their gold and green ;  
Two human faces featured in one mould ;  
Two seasons of the year that wear the same  
Embroidery of leaf and blade. 'Tis change,  
Leaping in freedom, scorning all restraint,  
And mocking at the wrinkled, back-bent crone,

Law, limping after ; 'tis variety,  
Exulting in gay freakishness of will,  
That nature loves. Even passion has its hour,  
As well as tame domestic love ; you put  
Snow-hearted Winter for the throbbing Spring.

*Elijah.*

Variety is infinite as He  
Of whom it is the reflex ; lawlessness  
Is the code of hell. Around the central truth,  
That God is one, cluster all kindred truths,  
All kindred beauties, and all kindred loves,  
In varying splendor, gracious and benign,  
Stem, branch, and dewy leaf, and flower and fruit,  
Around one temple-porch, a-climb to heaven.  
Love has a voice as varied as if each  
Particular star upon the firmament  
Were a melodious bird of varying tune :  
'Tis lust that narrows man, and puts the heart  
Of beast within his frame, and a brute man  
Is ever worst and loathsome of brutes.  
Beauty and joy are countless in their modes

As the lights twinkling on a wood when shines  
Clear noontide after rain, and mighty wind  
Tosses the leaves. The truth makes beautiful ;  
The truth makes free ; the truth makes glad ; the truth  
Makes happy, healthy, holy. Tainted worse  
Than air of sepulchres, or flitting hues,  
Wan yellow flames, and lights of livid green,  
That haunt the naked corpse whose unclosed eyes  
Yearn for the kindly hiding of the grave,  
Is that which, in the name of Ashtoreth,  
Thou callest love and beauty.

*Jezebel.*

Hard to bear  
Such words of insolence ! Yet tell me this :  
Is arrogance a virtue ? Hast thou heard  
That there is sin in pride ? Why, then, do ye,  
The Hebrews, sole among the nations spread  
Upon the equal breast of mother earth,  
Exclude all gods except your own ? deny  
That other gods exist ? refuse to share  
The general harmony, and to extend

That courteous tolerance to neighbor gods,  
Which neighbor peoples do not grudge to yours?

*Elijah.*

A nation shall be true unto itself:  
An alien life means falsity and death.  
No place, no name, no right to land or life  
Hath Israel save as chosen by the Lord  
To testify for him : to set the fact  
Of his existence, oneness, sovereignty,  
Massively visible, before the world :  
To be a hieroglyphic for mankind ;  
A word writ large in city, hill, and plain ;  
A javelin, hurled by his own hand among  
The heathen nations, startling, making room,  
Like lightning-flash amid the oaken boughs,  
By special means, exceptional and strange,  
For God's own nation. Part us from his voice,  
His hand, his eye, his personal governance,  
What are we? Bondmen broken from the yoke  
Of our Egyptian masters ; robbers armed,  
Who came, with red exterminating knife,

Into our neighbor's house ; infringers rude  
Of the unsyllabled yet solemn pact  
That knits the family of brother men  
In amicable league and friendly peace :  
God's people, or the enemies of mankind ;  
A prophet-nation, chosen of the Lord  
To preach his word, or else a maniac wild  
Whom men should seize and fetter. In ourselves,  
We are a puny breed, a feeble folk ;  
Led by our KING, we are a sacred band.  
Armored in light and helmed with righteousness,  
Bearing the ark that shrines the truth divine  
Which shall regenerate a death-struck world.  
O Jezebel, hadst thou but known thy day,  
Hadst thou but heard the Voice that called to thee,  
When thou, still young, from Sidon's coasts didst come  
To reign in Israel ; hadst thou loved the light,  
And turned from idols to the living God ;  
Hadst thou been wedded truly to the land,  
An Israelite indeed in faith, hope, love ;  
Oh, how serene with heaven's best blessedness,



How richly dowered in joy of doing good,  
How full of love and peace, thy life had been !  
A Ruth in crowned and radiant graciousness,  
A Deborah in regal strength of soul ;  
Around thee, as we learned to love thee well,  
The air would all have rung with welcoming ;  
Thy voice and that of Ahab would have been  
A rallying sound to bring again to one  
Our Ephraim's and Judah's scattered flock ;  
And glory brighter than of David's throne  
Had beamed from Dan even to Beersheba.  
And now thy day is past : thy night draws near.

*Jezebel.*

I will no longer speak with thee : begone !

*Elijah.*

But I must speak, and thou shalt hear, thy doom.  
Ere many moons had seen thee Israel's queen,  
With impious cruelty thou dipp'dst thy hand  
In blood of God's own prophets. Far away  
In Gilead, where I dwelt in peacefulness,  
The mighty wail of Israel reached mine ears

Over the prophets fallen. Since that day.  
With cruel wile, with steadfast subtlety,  
With dark Satanic sorcery, thou hast striven  
To make this people unclean as thyself;  
And last, and worst, because a poor, brave man,  
True to himself, his land, his God, was bold  
To face the king as free man, ought to face,  
And to deny his covetous request,  
Thou hast most basely murdered him.

*Jezebel.*

Nay, this

Is all too much. My lord, my husband, what!  
Dost thou stand by and hear me thus reviled?  
This fellow is a rebel, and would raise  
Commotion in the land, and bid the folk  
Forget their duty unto thee and me —

*Elijah.*

Woman, when such as thou is on a throne,  
It is not sacrifice of lamb or kid,  
It is not prayer at morn or even-tide,  
That is a people's service worthiest

Of God's acceptance. No. It is to leave  
The babe in crib, the lamb within the fold,  
The priest beside the altar, and to draw  
The sword of vengeance, spread the flag, and preach  
God's message of revolt. Hush! Hear me still.  
Unto all time the name of Jezebel  
Shall be the synonyme and type abhorred  
Of those great curses that afflict mankind :  
The curse of lust, that leads man ever down  
From heaven's blue smile of maiden charity ;  
The curse of tyranny, that kills the sense  
Of majesty in man, clothes murderous wrong  
In the most honorable garb of law,  
That turns the despot, human at the first,  
Into a torturing demon, and his slaves  
Into a ring of demon-worshippers.  
This is the sin of sins, the murder-sin  
Against the soul of mankind. Lust may be  
The feverish leaping of the blood, — disease  
Which health will chase ; rebellion against law,

Though bitter evil, may be but a fit  
Of transient delirium, strength abused,  
Not strength abolished ; but the race or tribe  
That willingly accepts a tyrant's chain,  
Content to take his word for law, content  
To merge the general reason and the sense  
Of common life and free-born patriotism,  
Of common wealth and common law, and all  
That banded free-men cherish and defend,  
In craven admiration of his power,  
Or skill, or knowledge, genius, yea, or wish  
To serve his country, — this same race is lost.  
The warrant for its death hath been made out  
In the high court of God ; and it shall die  
And rot into the dust. Be the pretence  
More shining than Sidonian blazonry, —  
Call it obedience, order, due respect  
For that which is above you, — what you will ; —  
Be the bribe carried in the tyrant's hand  
Desirable beyond all utterance, —

Security for property and life,  
Peace in the city, plenty in the store,  
And empire over half a world, — no less  
He who shall cast a stain on liberty,  
Or palliate the rule of one sole will  
O'er any nation imaging the God  
Whose children are the common brood of men,  
Is traitor to his kind, and poisoner  
Of the living wells where drinks the soul of man.

Among such traitors, badly eminent,  
Stands wicked Jezebel.

Thus saith the Lord :

From that same tower where thou so oft hast planned  
Thy sacrilegious murders, plotted oft  
Against the God of Israel, revelled wild  
In guilt adulterous, thou shalt be hurled  
Down headlong, shrieking in thy mad despair.  
Horse-hoofs shall trample on thy crashing bones.  
Dogs licked the blood of Naboth ; but his limbs

Were stiff and cold before they came to him.  
Whilst thou art quivering in the pangs of death,  
While ear still hears and flesh still feels, the dogs  
Shall rush upon thee, rend thee, tear thy flesh,  
And drink thy blood.

*Jezebel.*

Inhuman savage, peace !

*[She draws a dagger from her girdle and flies at him, attempting to stab him. He disappears.]*

Where is he? Gone ! Oh that this biting steel  
Had pierced his heart !

Well? good my lord the king,  
Your knees still knock together? Pry'thee look  
A little like a man. How I despise thee !

*[Goes. AHAB stands for a few moments, pale and trembling; then drags himself slowly from the garden.]*

THE END.













